

Gender and the Development of Didactic Writing, 1775-1816

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## Declaration

This thesis has been composed by myself and the work of which it is a record has been carried out by myself. All sources of information have been specifically acknowledged by means of reference.

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August, 1998

## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father, who died on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, 2000. I will always be grateful to both my parents for all that they have done for me.

## Abstract

Although there have been numerous studies of the ideas associated with the eighteenth century Enlightenment, few studies have looked at these ideas in relation to women writers.

This thesis examines in particular a set of ideas referred to as “moral sensibility” in terms of the development of women’s writing in the late eighteenth century. Thinkers such as Francis Hutcheson and Hugh Blair suggest, among other things, that human happiness lies in pursuing certain kinds of “pleasure” while controlling the appetite for others. The implication that many writers took from this thinking is that promoting one kind of pleasure over another will lead to greater social harmony. This thesis discusses how a variety of women writers exploit these ideas and use them to evolve a tradition of didactic writing. This tradition of writing claims to be promoting one kind of pleasure while discouraging another. For women writers, “pleasure” which is depicted as being morally healthy is associated with the values of domestic femininity: modesty, cleanliness and propriety. I will discuss how women writers often oppose this to what is described as “pleasure” which is depicted as being morally dangerous.

The texts I discuss in this thesis have in common their setting in the Highlands of Scotland. This is because another popular topic found in late eighteenth century writing is “primitivism,” a theory about the evolution of society from the primitive towards the civilised. In many cases, it is argued that this evolution sees the loss of a natural “simplicity” of moral sensibility, an ability to appreciate the right kinds of pleasure. Primitivism often takes the Highlands, seen to be less developed than the rest of Britain, as an example of the evolution of society and of human sentiment (what Thomas Blackwell calls a “*moral or philosophical History of the World*”). Many women writers describe their experience of the Highlands in terms of its “simplicity,” and the lesson it can teach its readers. This thesis examines the development of women’s writing which takes the Highlands as its subject and has the stated aim of “improving” its reader.



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## Introduction

A lady and a gentleman, more expeditious tourists than ourselves, came to the spot; they left us at the seat, and we found them again at another station above the Falls. Coleridge, who is always good-natured enough to enter into conversation with anybody whom he meets in his way, began to talk with the gentleman, who observed that it was a majestic waterfall. Coleridge was delighted with the accuracy of the epithet, particularly as he had been settling in his own mind the precise meaning of the words grand, majestic, sublime, etc., and had discussed the subject with William at some length the day before. "Yes, sir," says Coleridge, "it is a majestic waterfall." "Sublime and beautiful," replied his friend. Poor Coleridge could make no answer, and, not very desirous to continue the conversation, came to us and related the story, laughing heartily (*Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland A.D. 1803*, 37).

In the meantime I sat with the mother, as was much pleased with her conversation. She had an excellent fire, and her cottage, though very small, looked comfortable and cleanly; but remember I saw it only by firelight. She confirmed what the man had told us of the quiet manner in which they lived; and indeed her house and fireside seemed to need nothing to make it a cheerful happy spot, but health and good humour (*Recollections*, 20-1).

Thus writes Dorothy Wordsworth of her recollection of seeing the Falls of the Clyde during her journey to Scotland in 1803 with her brother William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Her recollection of this incident provides a point of entry into some of the issues explored in this thesis.

In Dorothy Wordsworth's recollection, Coleridge is concerned with the exact meaning of words like "grand," "majestic" and "sublime." His preoccupation with such words is part of a larger debate about the nature of aesthetic experience which had been taking place throughout the Eighteenth century. When he tries to "settle" in his mind "the precise meaning" of words like "grand," "majestic" and "sublime," he is not doing anything new: in 1759 Burke attempted to "settle" the meaning of such words in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*; in 1765 Lord Kames devoted chapter IV of *Elements of Criticism* to the definitions of "Grandeur" and "sublimity." And applying this kind of aesthetic terminology to travel experiences,

particularly the Highlands, was likewise nothing new. According to Sir Arthur Mitchell, well over 100 travellers to Scotland had published their accounts in the previous eight decades, and a good number of them used words like “sublime” to describe their Highland experience. Another tourist named Thomas Newte, for example, had some twenty years earlier than Coleridge used the same words to describe “contemplating” the “sublime horrors of this majestic scene” (*Tour*, 81-2). Newte is less concerned than Coleridge with the “precise meaning” of these words, running them together almost as blithely as the “expeditious tourists” in Dorothy Wordsworth’s description. For Coleridge and Wordsworth, determining the nature of aesthetic terminology places them - in this case, perhaps a little too well - in a pre-existing literary tradition.

But this literary tradition is a masculine one, and this thesis is interested in how women writers work alongside this tradition, borrowing from it but at the same time, constructing a very different kind of literary authority. My use of the term “literary authority” in this thesis will suggest the claim implicit in a text, either through tone or in the way the author constructs a literary persona, that he or she has a justification for writing, and that he or she has the right to attempt to influence the opinions or beliefs of readers. Different writers wield their authority differently, and in this thesis I am particularly interested in the distinction between how men and women define their literary authority. I will examine issues associated with gender and authority in writing about the Highlands of Scotland, a literary site where different kinds of authority can be seen evolving (I will explain in more detail below the significance of the Highlands to my study).

In Dorothy Wordsworth’s recollection, Coleridge has the authority to attempt to determine “the” meaning of certain words. But Dorothy Wordsworth has a very different sense of her authority as a woman. In the first passage, she seems to be only recording the event as an amusing anecdote, appearing wholly unconcerned with the issues of aesthetic representation which concern her brother and Coleridge. When Dorothy

Wordsworth describes her response to the Highlands in the second passage above, it is much more personal than the response of her brother and Coleridge, as in the second passage, above. She seems positively uncomfortable with making any large claims, willing only to take responsibility for her own intimate feelings. And she even describes these warily, careful to point out her perceptual limitations (“but remember I saw it only by firelight”). In her description of her experience of the Highlands, Dorothy Wordsworth sees scenes and often uses a similar set of key terms to describe them as male writers, but at the same time, she wields her literary authority differently. She aligns herself with the discourse but carefully underlines her feminine modesty. I will argue, however, that this authority only has the appearance of being modest.

Another woman writer brings together both the aesthetic terminology used by Coleridge and the modest tone of Dorothy Wordsworth, revealing some of the attitudes surrounding these different versions of literary authority. Elizabeth Isabella Spence describes the “beautiful, romantic, sublime and picturesque scenes” available in Scotland (*Sketches*, 2). But although she aligns herself with this aesthetic tradition, she also uses these words in a different way from Coleridge: she uses them descriptively, displaying little concern with the deeper aesthetic issues they represent. A page later, Spence goes to some trouble to distinguish her literary authority from that of “men”:

Men, perhaps through courtesy, have ascribed to the female impressions of national manners and moral character, an acuteness, accuracy, and justness, which have in vain been looked for in more metaphysical reasonings. From this circumstance I have frankly and candidly expressed my opinions and feelings, as they spontaneously arose on the spot whence they were written (3).

Spence suggests that as a woman, she has a specific – if limited – brand of literary authority and it is one which, she is careful to point out, does not transgress upon the literary territory of men. Like Dorothy Wordsworth, Spence defines her writing as being closely aligned with feeling, and distanced from intellectual activity.

Why are women writers so keen to appear to be aligned with a modest authority, based

on feelings and impression? To explore the development of a gender-specific style of writing, it is necessary to give some background to women's changing relationship with the private sphere. As a result of such factors as the growth of an urban middle class,<sup>1</sup> the removal of trade and production from the home,<sup>2</sup> and the rise of what has been called the "public" and "private" spheres, women were increasingly defined in relation to the private sphere in this period. As the social emphasis of women's roles changed from economic producers to emotional nurturers, women increasingly attempted to construct themselves as having the correct emotional configuration for the private sphere.

Gary Kelly discusses the domestic role played by women writers in eighteenth century literature. In spite of the limitations posed by the figure of the domestic woman, Kelly notes that "this figure was used by many women writers to gain access to the public, political, and professional domains otherwise considered unsuitable or too difficult of them - in a word, unfeminine" (7). Women's roles as writers became increasingly confined to improving life in the social sphere:

In order to fix their 'domestic' character, women were assigned 'reason' as rote-learning rather than independent critical thought, as domestic order and policing rather than public discourse, while being allowed freer rein in domains of 'fancy' and 'imagination', in 'light', 'ornamental', 'entertaining' and 'domestically useful' discourses of 'taste' that could add an inflection of gentility to middle class private life... (7).

Ruth Perry observes how the connection to the private sphere affected the kind of narratives women produced as a result:

The genteel city women were the especial casualties of the capitalization of home industry and the separation of work places from dwelling places. They were specialized out of the economic life of the cities and settled into the separate, private, households which have always characterized urban life. In this changing society, novels embellished and perpetuated the myths of romantic love needed to strengthen the new economic imbalances between men and women and necessary to make the lives of the dispossessed seem fulfilled (x).

In other words, women writers began to write narratives naturalising their association with the private sphere in the mid to late Eighteenth century. Although Perry's focus is

on romance and novel writing, a similar argument can be made for variations on narratives of domestic harmony, particularly as I will discuss in this thesis, the descriptions many women writers give of their “impressions” of Highland homes.

As women are increasingly aligned with the private sphere, they simultaneously construct a “public sphere” against which they often define themselves. Entering this public sphere is constructed as a transgressional act for women, and they are often heavily criticised (particularly by other women writers) for their immodest behaviour. It is worthwhile here to consider one very influential attack on a woman writer, Alexander Pope’s caricature of Eliza Haywood in *The Dunciad* in 1729. Haywood was part of an earlier generation of successful women writers, which includes Delariviere Manley and Aphra Behn, who had taken on a role of public authority which, a few years later, became the model of inappropriate female behaviour. In Pope’s caricature of Haywood, she is lampooned for her sexual incontinence, as if this is connected to her literary endeavours.<sup>3</sup> Haywood, in this depiction, seems to have willingly relinquished all claims to respectability, all but inviting Pope’s invasive attack.<sup>4</sup> Dale Spender notes that for years after the publication of *The Dunciad*, Haywood ceases writing; whether or not this is related to Pope’s caricature is not known, but at any rate her next published work is *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), a novel with a strongly didactic flavour in which a young girl is taught the value of domestic life.

The fear of this kind of attack weighs heavily on women writers for decades to come, as if public authorship is an open invitation for all kinds of criticism. But it is arguably women more than men who are critical of apparent immodesty in women writers, a fact which many contemporary critics ignore.<sup>5</sup> A writer examined in detail in this thesis for example, Anne Grant, quotes Pope’s *The Dunciad* in a letter to her publisher when explaining why she would not have a picture of herself printed in a collection of her letters: “I abhorred female portraits before a book ever since I read Pope’s couplet about Mrs Centlivre,” she writes, quoting Pope’s couplet: “Fair as before her work she stands



confess'd/ In flow'rs and pearls, by bounteous Kirkall dress'd" (*Essays*, 2: 275). Grant's willingness to be disciplined by Pope is perhaps the more surprising given that she aligns herself with a literary style which rejects the kind of "mannered" writing he has come to represent by the late Eighteenth century.

Grant's statement also reveals how women participated in reproducing the same attitudes which disciplined their writing in the first place. Grant is making a differentiation here between a woman who allows herself to attract the inappropriate gaze of men and one who actively discourages it. In this way, Grant, like many other women writers of this period, asserts her private respectability by pointing the finger at female immodesty elsewhere. Distinguishing herself from the category of "woman writer" embodied by Eliza Haywood, Grant appears to be doing something other than writing in the same immodest way as other women writers.

There is another quality which characterises the way these women construct their literary authority which is of particular interest to this thesis. The aesthetic travel discourse used by Coleridge in Dorothy Wordsworth's description had become so popular that forty years before the Wordsworths and Coleridge even took their trip, Samuel Johnson had already called on the aesthetic traveller to "gratify his eye with variety of landscapes; and regale his palate with a succession of vintages; but let him be contented to please himself without endeavour to disturb others" by publishing an account of his travels (*Idler*, 1760). Johnson argues that the real goal of travel writing should be to produce "useful" knowledge for the reader with rigorous inquiry; literary language has no place in writing about other cultures. This kind of writing should please and instruct by judiciously selecting material to produce a text which is both intellectually and morally beneficial. Although, as I will argue in Chapter 1, Johnson found his beliefs about "useful" travel writing to be easier said than done when writing his own *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, the idea that writing about other cultures could be beneficial is a popular one. Many writers use their experience of the Highlands to claim

what I will call a “didactic” authority - that is, to imply that a primary goal of writing is the desire to publish something which will be both intellectually and morally beneficial to the reader. And different writers - particularly men and women - have different interpretations of how this is achieved.

This thesis will explore how women exploited a niche in didactic writing which exploited the Highlands as a source of the right kind of domestic feeling, a brand of feeling which, it was claimed, would reproduce modest domestic feeling in their female readers. As in the passage above for example, Dorothy Wordsworth constantly foregrounds her “pleasure” at observing life in the Highlands and expressing the desire to communicate this pleasure to the reader. Like Spence’s “female impressions,” it is a modest kind of authority which keeps its distance from what is constructed as being the more masculine authority of men. As well as having its origins in the changing roles of women, this female authority also emerges out of an intellectual tradition in the Eighteenth century, the tradition of moral philosophy, which I will discuss below.

## Moral Philosophy

Coleridge’s concern with the “precise meaning” of certain words and Johnson’s concern with what is “useful” emerges out of a central question which preoccupied many writers in this period: what is the role of aesthetic and ethical experience in shaping the human subject?<sup>6</sup> A variety of other issues accompany this question, such as the conflict between virtue and self-interest; the connection between feeling (or “sentiment”) and morality; and the best way to promote positive sentiment in the interest of social harmony.

Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1651) becomes a focus for the inquiry into the human subject in the Eighteenth century, particularly in terms of the debate between whether virtue or self-interest is the primary human motivation. Hobbes attempts to take a scientific approach to the human subject, likening it to an atom which by nature is in constant motion. And



so, argues Hobbes, is man in constant motion, as forces of “attraction” and “aversion,” or pain and pleasure, stimulate his behaviour. For Hobbes, all emotions are explained by this kind of motion: fear, for example, is based on an aversion to some kind of hurt (1:6:16). The same rule stands for so-called moral behaviour: according to Hobbes virtue is little more than a matter of “wit,” that is, of successfully blending these appetites with “judgment” (1:8). Human life consists of constant movement and motion, acting in one’s own best interests, and Hobbes goes on to map out the best way to achieve social harmony.

The implication of Hobbes’ thinking stimulates a generation of philosophers to argue in favour of virtue in human nature. But before turning to the moral philosophers of the Eighteenth century, it is necessary briefly to mention John Locke, whose *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1681) becomes a highly influential way of describing the human subject. Locke famously argues against “innate ideas,” claiming instead that the mind is like an “empty cabinet” waiting to be furnished with information from the senses; all of these ideas are available to investigation and scrutiny. But when it comes to issues of morality, Locke retreats, stating his firm religious convictions:

I grant the exisistence of God in so many ways manifest, and the obedience we own him so congruous to the light of reason ... : but yet I think it must be allowed, that several moral rules may receive from mankind a very general approbation, without either knowing or admitting the true grounds of morality; which can only be the will and law of a God (1:3:6). [sic]

When faced with the question of “why do good,” Locke claims that a “Hobbist” would answer “Because the public requires it, and the Leviathan will punish you if you do not” (1:3:5). But the real answer is not self interest. Humans have a virtuous nature because that is how God made them: according to Locke, God has “by an inseparable connexion, joined virtue and public happiness together, and made the practice thereof necessary to the preservation of society” (1:3:6). Thus Locke provides a way of thinking about human nature, but does not work out the moral implications himself (later in his *Essay*, however, he points out that if “duly considered,” “[t]he idea of a Supreme Being” would

“afford such foundations of our duty and rules of actions as might place *morality amongst the sciences capable of demonstration*” as “incontestible as those in mathematics” [276]).

Although they do not use Locke’s “mathematics,” many other philosophers do attempt to demonstrate that human nature is virtuous, partially as a challenge to the “Hobbist” argument. The Third Earl of Shaftesbury uses Locke’s notion of a “sense” to argue for the existence of what he calls “a sense of right and wrong” in his *Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit*. Noting that the “religious part of Mankind” is “alarm’d by the Freedom of some late Pens,” he proposes to examine what, “*Honesty* or VIRTUE is, consider’d by it-self” (7). He distinguishes between what he calls “Goodness,” the natural behaviour of all animals, and “Virtue,” a characteristic specific to humans. Only man, he argues, “can have the notion of a publick Interest, and attain the Speculation or Science of what is morally good or ill” (31). According to Shaftesbury, part of the human ability to form a “general Notion of things” includes reflection on the moral behaviour of others. It is,

not only the outward Beings which offer themselves to the Sense, [which] are the objects of Affection; but the very *Actions* themselves, and the *Affections* of Pity, Kindness, Gratitude, and their Contrarys, being brought into the Mind, become Objects. So that, by means of this Reflected Sense, there arises another kind of Affection towards those very Affections themselves, which have already been felt, and are now become the Subject of a new Liking or Dislike (28).

We cannot help but reflect on, and react emotionally to, virtue or the lack thereof. Thus as colours, smells and sounds “act on our Sense,” data of a “*moral and intellectual kind*” act on our sense of right and wrong (31). Humans have what Shaftesbury calls “*natural and social Affections*,” a series of involuntary feelings which respond either approvingly or disapprovingly to this data (at least insofar as it is possible to respond as a disinterested viewer).

Shaftesbury’s *Inquiry* influences, among others, Francis Hutcheson. Hutcheson’s *A System of Moral Philosophy* (1755) develops Shaftesbury’s notion of the “sense of right

and wrong” into the “moral sense,” particularly in terms of the happiness we feel when we perceive virtuous behaviour. Hutcheson describes his project as “inquir[ing] into the disposition of the species ... and the objects from which its happiness can arise” to demonstrate the existence of virtue, without recourse to “supernatural revelation” (2). According to Hutcheson, we have two powers of perception: one through which we take in information and one through which we can reflect on this information (“sensation” and “consciousness”). The perceptions of the consciousness range from simple to complex and are associated with pain and pleasure, in a model similar to that of Locke. One of these modes of perception is the moral sense, which feels pain and pleasure associated with emotions such as honour and shame. Approval of certain kinds of behaviour is an instinct, a mental operation we conduct automatically.

But pleasure is not the only reason we act virtuously, in which case it would not be “virtue” at all but a response ultimately based on self-interest. In fact, argues Hutcheson, we approve or disapprove of certain actions regardless of the pleasure they will give us (for example, we approve of the virtues of our enemies). Approval reflects an absolute quality in moral beauty, according to Hutcheson. In other words, approval is not based on a system of reward, but on the value of disinterested goodness; the fact that we react involuntarily to disinterested goodness is evidence for the existence of a moral sense:

Our very desire of gaining honour, and the disposition in spectators to confer it, must pre-suppose a moral sense in both ... We cannot therefore say an action is judged good because it gains to the agent the pleasure of self-approbation; but it gains to him this pleasure because ... [it] has that quality which by the constitution of this sense we must approve (55-6).

Pleasure is a side-effect of virtue. We are attracted to moral beauty because we are designed to like it. Like Locke, Hutcheson suggests that ultimately, we are this way because this is how “the author of Nature” made us: he gave us “strong Affections” and made “virtue a lovely form that we might easily distinguish it from its contrary and be made happy by the pursuit of it” (*Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design*, 24).

Both Shaftesbury and Hutcheson try to demonstrate virtue in human nature through an appeal to “sentiment”: virtuous behaviour, they argue, is one of our greatest sources of pleasure, and this would not be the case if we did not have a special sense designed to detect it. A recurring word connecting affect to morality in Eighteenth Century moral philosophy is “pleasure,” a concept which, I shall argue, is appropriated by women writers in their construction of a didactic authority.<sup>7</sup> Many eighteenth-century philosophers posit different categories of pleasure, “higher” pleasures associated with the mind leading to greater fulfilment than the lower ones, associated with the body. Shaftesbury, for example, distinguishes “sensual” pleasures from “mental” ones, insisting that mental pleasure is not just more lasting, but a central component of our “natural affections”: “...the chief Happiness be from the MENTAL PLEASURES; and the chief mental Pleasures are ... founded in natural Affections” (126). Unlike the pleasures associated with the body (food or sex, for instance) which cannot offer a lasting sense of well-being, “mental pleasures” accompany the “Mind, or reason well compos’d and easy with itself” (117). A healthy conscience, able to reflect openly on moral issues, is not just the basis for religious morality, but also for our greatest happiness.

Hutcheson systematises the different pleasures. He distinguishes four classes of pleasure from the lowest to the highest: “pleasure of the palate” and “pleasure betwixt the sexes” are the two lower sensual pleasure, fine in moderation but unable to be the source of lasting happiness as neither “gives [a] sense of merit or worth” (125). (Arguably, it is this latter kind of pleasure which would be the kind invoked in John Cleland’s title, *Fanny Hill: A Woman of Pleasure* [1748]). The two higher pleasures are “of the sympathetick kind arising from the fortunes of others” (129) and pleasures which are “*moral*, arising from the consciousness of good affections and actions” (131). The former pleasure “never cloy” and the latter leads to a “soul kind and benign” (132). Given that all animals are designed to seek happiness, virtue must be the final goal humans are seeking.

Whether or not they subscribe to Hutcheson's model, other writers on philosophy similarly talk about different kinds of pleasure, the more refined leading to a greater form of happiness. Lord Kames, for example, in his *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (1751) distinguishes between the "pleasure and pain which arise from objects considered simply as existing" which "are to be placed in the lowest rank or Order of Beauty" (44), with the pleasure which accompanies a work of art or virtuous behaviour (45). Another writer on moral and aesthetic issues, Hugh Blair, warns of the futility of seeking sensual pleasures, noting that of those "who devote themselves to earthly pleasure, you will not find a single person who has attained his aim" (441); Blair argues throughout his *Sermons* that it is virtue which is the "most eligible portion of man" (440). This more refined pleasure is often associated with the arts. David Hume for example differentiates between a delicacy of "taste" and of "passion," noting that the pleasures of taste are preferable to those of passion, because pleasure associated with passion is generally beyond our control: when a man has refined his appreciation of the fine arts, however, he is according to Hume "more happy by what pleases his tastes, than by what gratifies his appetites, and receives more enjoyment from a poem, or a piece of reasoning, than the most expensive luxury can afford" ("Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion," 11).

According to this moral philosophy, then, true happiness lies in seeking the refined pleasures of virtue and in controlling our appetite for lower ones. An important kind of refined feeling is "sympathy," suggesting a connection between people through a correspondence of feeling; Burke, for example, defines it in his *Enquiry* as "a sort of Substitution, by which we are put in place of another man, and affected in many respects as he is affected" (I.xiii). Hume sees sympathy as the ability to reproduce the feelings of others in oneself: "When I see the effects of passion in the voice and gestures of any person, my mind immediately passes from these effects to their causes, and forms such a lively idea of the passion, as is presently converted in the passion itself" (*Treatise*, Book

3, 575-6).<sup>8</sup> In this thinking, sympathy is what engenders social harmony and as such, much attention is focused on how it can be promoted. Many writers on the subject point to the arts as the way to improve our ability to associate pleasure with sympathy. Kames finds that “sympathy” is the “great cement of human society” (*Essays* 16). Because it offers such an essential form of pleasure, we turn to means of exercising it: “This turn of mind makes history, novels and plays the most universal and favourite entertainments” (18). In fact, “tragedy,” although apparently not producing pleasure, is socially beneficial because it is an “exercise of the social passions” (27). In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* Hugh Blair suggests that learning to appreciate art has a moral end: “The pleasures of taste ... gradually raise [the mind] above the attachments of sense to prepare it for the enjoyments of virtue” (5). Hume also argues that the “more these refined arts [e.g. philosophy and poetry] advance, the more sociable men become” (“Of Refinement in the Arts,” 169). Both temper and behaviour improve alongside the “liberal arts” as men “must feel an increase in humanity, from the very habit of conversing together, and contributing to each other’s pleasure and entertainment” (169). It will be this notion of a morally improving pleasure, produced through reading certain kinds of “modest” writing that many women writers of this period will claim to be providing.

Pleasure is a key concept in a variety of other thinkers as well. Two theories of aesthetic experience which become very popular, particularly with writers on the Highlands, are the sublime and the picturesque, both of which are indebted to the concept of pleasure popular in the Eighteenth century moral philosophy. Edmund Burke’s *Enquiry* explores an aesthetic experience so overwhelming that the perceiver comes face to face with his or her own mortality. But the ability to experience the refined pleasure of the sublime depends on the mental abilities of the perceiver.

There are others so continually in the agitation of gross and merely sensual pleasures, or so occupied in the low drudgery of avarice, or so heated in the chace of honours and distinction, that their minds, which had been used continually to the storms of these violent and tempestuous passions, can hardly be put in motion by



the delicate and refined play of the imagination (24).

The wrong kind of pleasure undermines the different functions of the mind: those pre-occupied with the lower pleasures are incapable of the “delicate and refined play of the imagination” needed to experience the sublime. Burke sees the sublime as a kind of “labour,” even likening it to the body’s ingestion of “fibre, which is requisite for carrying on the natural and necessary secretions” (135). The sublime is necessary for healthy mental functioning; those who cannot experience it, it is implied, may not have a healthy moral system.

Another articulation of aesthetic beauty in terms of morality is William Gilpin’s theory of the picturesque. There has been some recent criticism of the picturesque,<sup>9</sup> but no critic has considered Gilpin as a didactic writer, although he was a Presbyterian Minister who wrote other didactic tracts, including *Sermons* (1788) and *Moral Contrasts; or the Powers of Religion Exemplified under Different Characters* (1798). According to Gilpin, the goal of the picturesque tourist is to seek scenes in nature which are characterised by qualities found in painting, such as contrast, harmony and integration; the reason for seeking these scenes is the positive sensibility that will be accordingly produced in the perceiver. His second essay is interested in “what way the mind is gratified by these objects” (46). The answer is that the perceiver learns to appreciate an aesthetic pleasure, in a similar category to moral pleasure: according to Gilpin, the admirer of picturesque beauty is “an admirer also of the *beauty of virtue*” (47). Even if the pleasure received from apprehending beauty does not inspire the viewer with “religious awe,” there will still be a “rational, and agreeable amusement” produced. And this kind of pleasure, however modest, is still preferable to other kinds of sensual pleasure: no matter how small the pleasure provided by the picturesque, “...even this may be of some use in an age teeming with licentious pleasure; and may in this light at least be considered as having a moral tendency” (47). Gilpin provides several examples of picturesque travel, including his influential *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in*

*the Year 1776, on Several Parts of Great Britain; particularly the High-Lands of Scotland* (1789). The Highlands is a particularly fertile site for the seekers of picturesque pleasure, Gilpin's concept of the picturesque becomes extremely popular, and many travellers to the Highlands wrote picturesque descriptions of their experience.

As well as influencing aesthetic writing, the discourse of sensibility becomes a key concept in the literature of the mid- to late Eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup> The notion that literature could have such an important function as the moral refinement of its readers fuelled the rise of the literature of "sensibility," that is, literature interested primarily in the stimulation of certain kinds of feeling.<sup>11</sup> Although it went through a variety of phases, the interest in the didactic potential of sensibility remained constant. Samuel Richardson is a key figure in the development of a connection between didacticism and sensibility.<sup>12</sup> Critics have traced Richardson's influence on the development of the novel in *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748-8).<sup>13</sup> *Pamela* (which as Mark Kinkead-Weekes observes is extraordinarily influential) is among other things a parable of the potential moral power of sentimental writing. Cornered by Mr B., Pamela encodes her moral virtue in a series of letters addressed to her parents. When Mr B. seizes and reads these letters, he learns to feel in a more sensitive and sociable way. Through reading, he is transformed from an amoral rake into a morally aware and responsible social being. In the novel's world, then, Pamela's writing has an important function, spreading the values of the private sphere and enabling the achievement of harmony both on a wide social scale as well as in more specific personal terms. According to notions of sensibility, this literary model should likewise work in terms of the real reader of Richardson's novels: Mullan notes that Samuel Johnson praised Richardson's works by claiming that the sentiment in them was more important than the plot (58). Richardson promoted his novels as didactic material, with the intention of promoting moral sensibility in the reader; this model of sentimental writing had a profound influence not just on the novel, but on women's writing in general.<sup>14</sup> His popularising of didacticism turned certain kinds of writing into a legitimate activity for a generation of women



writers.

Anne Grant, for example, a writer who will be discussed in detail in this thesis, aligns herself with Samuel Richardson's model closely. In a letter published at the end of her *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders* (1811), for example, Grant defends Richardson's *Clarissa*, apparently to a young girl who has written to complain of its tediousness. *Clarissa* is worth the effort of reading it, Grant argues, as it offers not the easy, fashionable pleasure of some writers, but a moral pleasure of benefit to the young reader (*Essays* 2: 313-6).

Grant makes much of the distinction between writing which is fashionable and writing which is "simple." Like the claim to be producing the right kind of "pleasure," the claim to be "simple" is another recurring theme in eighteenth-century writing. Many writers, particularly women, use the word "simple" to invoke a set of values, associated with the rejection of fashion, luxury and false ornament and invoking instead a didactic authority based on domestic pleasure and sympathetic feeling.

In fact, the word "simple" becomes increasingly common in Eighteenth century thinking, as a means of - among other things - making a distinction between writing which is morally improving and writing which is not. It is found in some of the early philosophers, in the *OED* meaning of "consisting or composed of one substance, ingredient or element, uncompounded, unmixed." Hobbes, for example, describes the "simple passions" (such as love, hate or grief), basic emotions associated with pleasure or displeasure of the mind (1.6.13). Locke uses the word "simple" in a similar meaning to characterise certain ideas which are the building blocks of our understanding. A "simple" idea would be based on an indivisible sensation, such as the warmth and malleability of a piece of wax.

Moral philosophy retains the notion of "simple" senses or ideas, suggesting small blocks

of emotion out of which a larger system evolves. Shaftesbury does not use the word “simple,” but does describe what he sees as our “natural affections,” again consisting of the original, indivisible feelings upon which our greater moral awareness stands, feelings associated with instinctive sympathy and moral pleasure (I will return to Shaftesbury presently). Hutcheson briefly mentions the “simple” pleasures, in this case the smaller pleasures out of which more complex, refined moral pleasure develops. The example he gives is of music: “The simpler pleasures arise from the concords [of musical composition]”; from these smaller pleasures we build a more complex ability to enjoy moral beauty. In this thinking, a simple pleasure is something natural, wholesome and sincere, an original human feeling before it is altered, for better or for worse, by the process of enculturation.

But the notion of “simple” as in single and indivisible develops into a different concept. A “simple” pleasure comes to suggest variations on Shaftesbury’s notion of “natural Affections,” associated with the higher order of sympathy and morality while avoiding the easy pleasure of fashion and luxury in urban culture. It begins to invoke the additional *OED* meaning, “free from duplicity, dissimulation or guile; free from ... pride, ostentation or display; free from artificiality; or free from over-refinement.” When Dorothy Wordsworth recalls being “pleased” by the impressions made on her of a simple domestic scene in the rural Highlands, it is this kind of sympathetic, originary human pleasure she is invoking. I will explore how the word “simple” evokes the kind of didactic feminine authority women are attempting to construct. By claiming to be “simple,” it avoids two things: first, the kind of “metaphysical reasonings” from which women sought to distance themselves; and second, through its association with virtuous pleasure, it also allows women to distance themselves from the kind of immodest women’s writing which offers a different kind of sensual, seductive pleasure. Thus Grant asserts of her own poems that their “value” is in the “simplicity of the thought” (269). “I know I would have pleased much more,” adds Grant, “had I permitted my imagination to wander among the very beautiful glens and glades that here and there derive a nameless

enchantment”; but while “Arcadian images would please more ... verisimilitude will please longer” (*Essays* 2:271). The suggestion is that pleasure of a kind which benefits society emerges from a simple, natural, sincere evocation of feeling and impression.

But there are more complexities associated with the word “simple.” It is not just associated with a good kind of pleasure or “natural Affections,” but also with a larger socio-economic change. The mid-Eighteenth century was a period of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, a process which became the source of some anxiety. Critics have suggested that the popularity of this nostalgic primitivism is related to rapid economic and social change in the early to mid Eighteenth century. The Enclosure Acts had contributed to urban growth since the Sixteenth century. Combined with the improved employment prospects throughout the Eighteenth century, it is little surprise that the population of London rose from 200,000 in 1600 to 900,000 in 1800 (Benfield xx). Rising wages and new urban industries led to a rise in consumerism: “Britain became a mass consumer society in the pre-industrial period, 1650-1750” (Benfield xx). Marilyn Butler finds a connection between this new materialism and anxieties about the effects of luxury and comfort: she argues that there is a “refusal to validate the contemporary social world - even though, to the retrospective eye, those who lived in society were never so prosperous, powerful or (presumably) happy. The art of the late Eighteenth century fell decidedly out of love with material possessions” (16).

Following this new materialism (or the expectation of materialism), many writers begin to warn against excesses of “luxury”. There are two associations with the concept of “refinement” in the Eighteenth century: while some refinements - those leading to greater virtue - are applauded, too much of the wrong kind of refinement - associated with politeness, affectation and luxury - is often depicted as dangerous. The word “simple” takes on the additional *OED* meaning of “Not marked by any elegance or grandeur; very plain or homely; a mode of life in which anything of the nature of luxury is intentionally avoided.”

Shaftesbury, for example, writes about the threat luxury poses to our “natural affections,” arguing that humans are designed for labour, and the lack of exercise endemic in modern society depletes these natural affections: “We see the enormous Growth of Luxury in capital Citys, such as have long the Seat of Empire. We see what Improvements are made in Vice of every kind, where numbers of Men are maintain’d in lazy Opulence, and wanton Plenty” (133). Sensual pleasures are easily gratified in cities, argues Shaftesbury, while the higher pleasures are all too easily left unexercised. A host of writers give similar warning against luxury: A writer calling himself “Civis” writes in the *London Magazine* in September 1754 that “Amongst the many reigning vices of the present age none have risen to a greater height than that fashionable one of luxury, and few require a more immediate suppression, as it not only enervates the people, and debauches their morals, but also destroys their substance” (409). The antidote to this corrupted sensibility is an attempt to reclaim the lost innocence of pre-industrial society, often valorised for its perceived “simplicity.” David Hume reflects the popularity of the warnings against luxury when he notes how “men of severe morals blame even the most innocent luxury, and represent it as the source of all the corruptions, disorders, and factions incident to civil government” (“Of Refinement in the Arts,” 168).

So a new interest in primitive culture in this period valorises its perceived “simplicity.” Lois Whitney describes what she calls the “Theory of Progressive Degeneration”; according to this theory, refined human culture is moving ever further away from its original state:

God had endowed all men ... with intelligence sufficient to find out the uniform and eternal laws of nature; if civilized man fails to discover and follow the laws of nature as perfectly as primitive man, it is because his mind and heart have become corrupted with the process of civilisation (42).

Opposed to the luxury and corruption of urban life is the peace and solitude of the rural sphere and the simple lifestyle of its inhabitants. This trend is mirrored in a general landscape movement of turning away from a taste for the manicured pastoral gardens of

early century in favour of a more wild, untamed natural beauty several decades later.<sup>15</sup> Travel writers likewise begin to describe their overwhelming aesthetic pleasure in a variety of “wild” landscape, such as the Alps or the Highlands of Scotland.<sup>16</sup>

It was not just philosophers like Shaftesbury who give warnings of the dangers of “luxury.” Women writers also often rail against corruption and luxury, but tend to describe a slightly different opposition between urban luxury and rural solitude. They oppose the luxury of the urban world with the simple domesticity of the rural, or semi-rural, sphere. Chapter Five of this thesis, for example, discusses a novel which opposes Highland “simplicity” to urban corruption. Such an opposition can be seen in a different vein in some of Jane Austen’s novels, where honest rural virtues are opposed to urban insincerity.<sup>17</sup>

A taste for so-called simplicity is also found in changing literary stylistics, as well, in the *OED* sense of “free from elaboration or over-refinement.” This is in many ways a reaction against the neo-classical writers like Dryden and Addison, who had criticised earlier writers for their lack of polish.<sup>18</sup> The neo-classic writers saw themselves as “improving the English language,” and Pope in particular wrote a poetry for the “class of the polite,” aimed at the “upwardly mobile virtues of the former vulgar bourgeoisie” (Staves, 151). But by mid-Century, tastes begin to change. Pope and Dryden become the subject of some criticism. David Hume is less caustic than many when he notes that Pope lies at the extreme of “refinement and simplicity, in which a man can indulge himself, without being guilty of any blameable excess” (“Of Simplicity and Refinement,” 193). Simplicity, then, begins to suggest a kind of writing which is not too polished, retaining the natural energy of sincere feeling. Hume quotes Addison’s definition of fine writing in his essay as consisting of “sentiments which are natural, without being obvious,” and argues that it is not just preferable, but safer to tend towards the extreme of simplicity in writing, rather than refinement, “*because the former excess is both less beautiful and more dangerous than the latter*” (194). According to Hume,

“There is something surprising in a blaze of wit and conceit,” which can lead ordinary readers to “falsely imagine it to be the most difficult, as well as the most excellent way of writing.” And because of this misconception, it is “the more dangerous, and the more apt to pervert the taste of the young and inconsiderate” (196). Hume even thinks he might see a corresponding “degeneracy of taste, in FRANCE as well as in ENGLAND” (194). By contrast, simplicity is more refreshing: “it is with books as with women, where a certain plainness of manners and of dress is more engaging than that glare of paint and airs and apparel, which may dazzle the eye, but reaches not the affections” (195). Simplicity in writing becomes a sign of sincere feeling, rather than the “degenerate” tastes associated with the wrong kind of refinement.

“Simplicity” becomes an increasingly admired virtue in writing in the second half of the Eighteenth century. Hume notes the “copiousness” of the debate between refinement and simplicity, and argues in another essay that “Everyone is united in applauding elegance, propriety, simplicity and spirit in writing” (“Of the Standard of Taste,” 134). Hugh Blair for example constantly applauds simplicity in writing. He opens his *Essays in Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* by describing his project as the “endeavour to explode false ornament, to direct attention more towards substance than show, to recommend good sense as the foundation of all good composition, and simplicity as essential to all true ornament” (2).

As well as being an ingredient in good writing, simplicity begins to take on certain moral overtones, suggesting an honesty and sincerity lacking elsewhere. Blair also uses the word in his *Sermons*, for example, suggesting a clear and sensible mode of reasoning: “From the simplest and plainest principles of reason it must appear, that religious worship, disjoined from justice and virtue, can upon no account whatever find acceptance from God” (1777). Thomas Paine also uses it in *Common Sense*, as he forcefully compares the “simplicity” of a straightforward government with the bilious complexities of the British system. William Gilpin devotes an entire Sermon to the subject of how the natural and virtuous “simplicity” of the Gospel has been corrupted:



the Jews, when they refused to acknowledge “the *simplicity that is in Christ*,” were the first in a series of “mischievous causes” which has corrupted the Word of God (“On the Simplicity of the Gospel,” 38). Gilpin adds in his sermon that we cannot allow similar forces as those which lead to the corruption of the Gospel to corrupt ourselves as well, and we must seek a “simplicity in manners” to counteract the “vanities of a dissipated age” (55). What is “simple,” then, claims to be an escape from all forms of corruption.

And there is another connection between morality and simplicity. Hume is not the only writer to align simplicity with a desirable female modesty: in fact, this is exactly how women like Anne Grant characterise themselves and their writing. For women, the word “simple” invokes the values of privacy, modesty and domesticity, values it is claimed which are in danger of being lost in the corruption of the modern world; the epitome of this kind of corruption is the woman writer who uses “ornament” in her writing as a matter of fashion. I will examine, for example, how Grant vociferously and aggressively insists on her own “simplicity” in writing, particularly from the rural solitude of the Highlands, contrasting herself to the women of the urban sphere who use “dazzle” to offer the reader the wrong kind of pleasure: “My muse shall have no ornament but ... the simple folds of customary tartan” (*Essays* 2:269-70). Thus Elizabeth Inchbald’s *A Simple Story* (1791), a didactic novel, would claim to be “simple” on two accounts: teaching the values of domestic pleasure while warning against the corrupting pleasures of the urban world; it also claims to use an unornamented, straightforward style to tell the story. Miss Vening’s *Simple Pleasures* (1811) also invokes this modesty, even though the book itself – a selection of basic chemistry experiments that can be carried out by teenagers – seems to have little to do with either pleasure or simplicity. Elizabeth Isabella Spence characterises her *Sketches of the Past Manners, Customs and Scenery of Scotland* (1811) as consisting of “simple and unaffected observations” (vii); but they are not quite simple enough for the *Critical Review* of August, 1811 which criticises Spence’s *Sketches* for excessive literariness, suggesting instead that “Miss Spence [should] attend solely to simple narrative [which] will not only improve her style ... but

afford more instruction and amusement to all of those who read her work” (383).

Women’s role in moral sensibility is constructed as being didactic, teaching through its modest and simple style.

The debate about moral sensibility became even more intense after the French Revolution. The ongoing debate in Britain about French politics was often coloured with the issues of Enlightenment thinking: is human nature really good, or does it need the firm hand of aristocratic authority? Does too much indulgence in sensibility lead to emotional indulgence and mob rule? Marilyn Butler points out that the critics of the French revolution (“anti-jacobins”) often misrepresented the thinking influencing the literature of sensibility, parodying it in order to warn against its apparent dangers (epitomised by the recent events in France). This debate was so influential that even writers with minimal political interest claimed that their writing was designed to teach a socially-responsible kind of feeling. This is another aspect of “simple feeling”, a feeling which avoids the excesses of what was often depicted as dangerous mob hysteria. I will examine this in more detail in Chapter Five of this thesis.

## Primitivism

This thesis is particularly interested in how the Highlands become entangled in issues associated with the debate between refinement and simplicity, and how some writers turn these issues into didactic authority. Questions of historical progress, the changing nature of sensibility, the trend towards new stylistics, and the authenticity of Macpherson’s Ossianic poetry raised in regard to the Highlands are part of a deeper issue: what is the nature of the knowledge which can be extracted from experience of the Highlands, and who has the authority to extract it? Coleridge may have felt his authority undermined when he heard the other “expeditious travellers” using words like “sublime” and “majestic,” and I will argue that Dorothy Wordsworth also quietly asserts her authority by writing about her “pleasure” at Highland simplicity. Women, however modest they may appear, are active contenders for their own brand of this authority.



Some of these issues can be seen in a brief examination of the development of what could today be described as ethnography of the primitive.<sup>19</sup> A thinker who popularises this approach in Scotland in the first half of the Eighteenth century is Thomas Blackwell, an Aberdonian scholar, who warns against modern “luxury” at the same time as he describes the cultural context of primitive life. His writings are part of the “stadialist” theory of cultural change, that is, that society develops in stages from the “primitive” – the stage of hunter/gatherer in which man is in a state of innocent benevolence – to savagery, and from there to civilisation, where luxury threatens to undermine the positive effects of social refinement. Blackwell describes how stadialist historical writing can usefully describe the changes in sentiment:

*A moral or philosophical History of the World well writ wou'd be a very useful work; to observe ... in what Simplicity Men began at first, and by what Degrees they came out of that Way by Luxury, Ambition, Improvement or Changes in Nature in Them (Letters Concerning Mythology, 113).*

Blackwell's rhetoric echoes that of Shaftesbury's warnings against the effect of luxury on our “natural affections.” History should trace the change in moral sensibility from the early primitive with a particular interest in how this sensibility can be debased by modern luxury.

Blackwell writes just such a study of Greek culture in his *Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735), using some of the implications of moral philosophy to look at the changes in human sensibility from the primitive to the modern state. Blackwell indirectly suggests that his own “speculations” offers a moral improvement for the reader, a suggestion that would be similarly applied to Highland culture, past and present. Blackwell discusses how the conditions of primitive life lead to a very different kind of poetry than that of the moderns:

in a wide country, not under a regular government, or split into many, whose inhabitants live scattered, and ignorant of laws and discipline; in such a country, the manners are simple, and accidents will happen every day: exposition and loss of infants, encounters, escapes, rescues, and every other thing that can inflame the human passions while acting, or awake them when described, and recalled by imitation (165).

Instead of an appeal to literary sophistication, Blackwell appeals to feeling as a means of judging ancient Greek poetry. The many factors endangering survival in a primitive society, he suggests, lead to a state of strong feeling which can be evoked by the oral poet, Homer, and felt by the listeners. But when luxury has given us a life of comfort, there is a significant reduction in our magnitude of feeling:

But let us be ingenuous, my Lord, and confess, that while the Moderns admire nothing but Pomp, and can think nothing great or beautiful, but what is the Produce of Wealth, they exclude themselves from the pleasantest and most natural Images that adorned the old Poetry. State and Form disguise Man; and Wealth and Luxury disguise Nature. Their Effects in Writing are answerable: A Lord-Mayor's Show, or grand Procession of any kind, is not very delicious Reading, if described minutely, and at length; and great Ceremony is at least equally tiresome in a Poem, as in ordinary Conversation (164).

In modern society, noble feeling is replaced by low desires - sensual pleasure - and this is reflected in the poetry. As luxury moderates "human passions" (a version of Shaftesbury's "natural Affections"), our original emotional network is disguised. Distanced from these original passions, the resulting poetry is one of "great Ceremony," a poetry which is as "tiresome" as a "grand Procession" of any kind." Instead of awakening the passions, modern poetry puts them to sleep. Blackwell sees the gap between the natural feeling of the primitive and the "disguised" feeling of the modern as constantly widening.

But Blackwell places his own form of primitive ethnography in this gap; writing about primitive sensibility gives us a vital sense of this disguised feeling:

The importance of this good fortune will best appear, if your lordship reflects on the pleasure which we receive from a representation of natural and simple manners: it is irresistible and enchanting; they best show human wants and feelings; they give us back the emotions of an artless mind, and the plain methods we fall upon to indulge them: goodness and honesty have their share in the delight; for we begin to like the men, and would rather have to do with them, than with more refined by double character. Thus the various works necessary for building a house, or a ship; for planting a field, or forging a weapon, if described with an eye to the sentiments and attention of the man so employed, give us great pleasure, because we feel the same. Innocence, we say, is beautiful; and the sketches of it,

wherever they are truly hit off, never fail to charm: witness the few strokes of that nature in Mr Dryden's *Conquest of Mexico* and the *Inchanted Island* (163-4).

Blackwell suggests that his writing works on the level of sympathy, that like a "*moral or philosophical History*," his description of "natural and simple manners" gives "us back the emotions of an artless mind." In fact, Blackwell's writing seems almost to play a similar role to that of Homer: the "pleasure" we get from his "representations" are a modest version of the "passions awakened" by the oral poet in his listeners. It claims to play a similar role as sentimental writing, acting on the reader to improve his or her moral awareness by teaching a higher form of pleasure. Blackwell's model, suggesting that writing about "primitive" culture can have a morally improving effect on the reader - not unlike that claimed by the literature of sensibility - is extremely influential in Scotland, where the "primitive" Highlands are becoming a subject of increasing interest to natives and travellers alike.

James Macpherson's ostensible translations in the early 1760s fuels the interest in primitivism. Supported and partially financed by some of the leading figures of the Edinburgh literati, including Hugh Blair, William Robertson, David Hume and John Home, Macpherson claims to find a series of fragments of third century Gaelic epic.<sup>20</sup> Adam Potkay discusses how Ossian reflects many of the literary tastes of the times, particularly a certain stylistic roughness that appeals to the desire for a more primitive, "simple" style of writing. His poetry is very widely read and in the last quarter of the Eighteenth century and has much influence on the writing of this period. But the authenticity of these poems soon becomes the subject of much debate. Susan Manning examines this debate in terms of Scottish nationalism, mentioning Anne Grant as a "militant Highlandwoman" who pours scorn on Ossian's critics. But I would argue that as well as being an issue of nationalism, it is also one of authority; that is, whether or not the Highlands can be claimed as the source of moral knowledge. Hugh Blair's *Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* (1763) takes part in this argument: although his *Dissertation* can be seen as part of the authenticating process, it also claims the

Highlands as the source of moral wisdom, found indirectly through an ability to feel pleasure related to the lost simplicity of the primitive.

Blair's *Critical Dissertation*, like Blackwell's *Enquiry*, fits nicely into the gap between primitive and modern sensibility, acting as a kind of emotional map of how to relocate lost originary feeling or "natural affections." Like Blackwell, Blair argues that more useful than historical writing is "The history of human imagination and passion" (1). Reading Ossian's poems,

makes us acquainted with the notions and feelings of our fellow-creatures in the most artless ages; discovering what objects they admired, and what pleasures they pursued, before those refinements of society had taken place, which enlarge indeed, and diversify the transactions, but disguise the manners of mankind (1).

Like Blackwell, Blair suggests that there is a didactic value to certain kinds of study of primitive culture, that it can elevate our moral sensibility. But Blair also outdoes Blackwell. Homer is older by a thousand years than Ossian, but is it developmental, not chronological time which is the significant cultural factor. Because Homer's country was "much farther advanced" his poetry is more diverse, more varied and possesses a "deeper knowledge of human nature" than Ossian. Moreover, living in a world with more social stability, he is a more "cheerful poet." But Ossian has other virtues. Unlike Homer, he is from a "rude age and country" so that "though the events that happen be less diversified than those of Homer, they are all, however, of the kind fittest for poetry" (22). Ossian is more brooding, more passionate, and more taciturn. Both poets are sublime, adds Blair, but sublime in a different way: Homer's sublimity is more impetuous and fiery, found most often in his descriptions of "actions and battles"; Ossian's sublimity is elevating and fixing, located in the poetry's "sentiment" (23).

It is this "sentiment" which makes Ossian's poetry of the most morally uplifting kind, emerging as it does from an "undissipated mind" (22) in a period without any luxury or refinement. The characteristic feeling produced by Ossian is the "joy of grief," which "never fails, by powerful sympathy, to affect the heart" (71), not unlike Kames' notion

that the benefit of tragedy is to exercise the sympathetic passions. The joy of grief is not an easy feeling, but Blair adds that if Ossian “be thought too melancholy, yet he is always moral” (74). His poems “awake the tenderest sympathies, and inspire the most generous emotions. No reader can rise from him, without being warmed with the sentiments of humanity, virtue and honour” (74). The “pleasure” of Ossian is not of the easy, sensual kind, but requires mental labour, much like Burke’s sublime:

It is necessary here to observe, that the beauties of Ossian’s writings cannot be felt by those who have given them only a single or a hasty perusal. His manner is so different from that of the poets, to whom we are most accustomed; his style is so concise, and so much crowded with imagery; the mind is kept at such a stretch in accompanying the author; that an ordinary reader is at first apt to be dazzled and fatigued, rather than pleased. His poems require to be taken up at intervals, and to be frequently reviewed; and then it is impossible but his beauties must open to every reader who is capable of sensibility. Those who have the highest degree of it, will relish them the most ... (209).

Ossian did not write like “modern poets,” adds Blair, “to please readers and critics” (209). The pleasure produced by reading Ossian is for Blair a difficult one, not like the pleasures associated with luxury offered by contemporary writers. This pleasure can only be appreciated by those with a more refined sensibility. Like Burke’s sublime, it is an indirect reflection of the reader’s moral stature.

The moral benefit of reading Ossian, then, is largely a result of his primitive society, a society even more primitive than that of Homer. Blair’s repetitive use of the word “simple” suggests the moral benefits of coming into contact with this kind of writing. Having an “undissipated mind” means that both Ossian’s feelings and style are unrefined and unornamented with “no subtile refinements on sorrow; no substitution of description in place of passion” (70). Ossian presents us with original human feeling, not unlike Shaftesbury’s “natural affections”: he “giv[es] vent to the simple and natural emotions of the heart.” Ossian’s lack of literary refinement also adds to his sublime style: “Simplicity and conciseness, are never-failing characteristics of the stile of a sublime writer. He rests on the majesty of his sentiments, not on the pomp of his expressions” (69). As soon as a writer seeks to embellish a sentiment “round and round with glittering ornaments,” the

sublime elevation is lost. Blair concludes his *Dissertation* by connecting the morally uplifting pleasure of Ossian with this dignified simplicity: “Whilst it pleases and fills the ear with a variety of harmonious cadences ... it allows the spirit of the original to be exhibited with more justness, force, and simplicity” (75). Simplicity, a virtue of an “undissipated” mind in a rude society, is claimed for the ancient Highlanders as one of the true means of uplifting the reader. Embodying this lost “simplicity,” *Ossian* offers an unusual, and morally uplifting, form of pleasure. The implication behind Blair’s writing is that uncovering this simplicity is one way of preserving social decline into luxury.

Simplicity as a moral counter to luxury becomes a theme in much writing of this period and reading *about* primitive life is claimed to be a kind of education of the sentiments against corruption. Kames finds a “general proposition” on “Luxury” in his study of primitive life, *Sketches of Man* (1775), claiming that “every such indulgence is condemned by the moral sense” (108). *Ossian* (which according to Kames has already been examined by the “distinguished” Hugh Blair) is truly primitive, “being probably the only work now remaining that was composed in the hunter-state” (92), and therefore teaches lessons of benevolent sentiment. The Reverend John Adams also asserts that reading about the “ingenious sentiments” of the past provides “elegant entertainment” for the discerning reader. In his own *Curious Thoughts on the History of Man* (1770), he connects simplicity to virtue, and in his chapter “On the Simplicity of Ancient Manners,” he quotes contemporary Highland society as an example.

Although the authority associated with the moral benefits of studying primitive society – particularly in the form of the Highlands – promises to be indisputable, it is contested by some critics. Samuel Johnson is a noted sceptic: as Butler notes he was not only unimpressed by the taste for primitivism in general, but doubtful of the authenticity of *Ossian* in particular. He turns the moral issue at stake from one of luxury vs. simplicity to one of truth vs. error:

The Scots have something to plead for their so easy reception of an improbable



fiction. They are seduced by their fondness for their supposed ancestors. – A Scotchman must be a very sturdy moralist, who does not love Scotland better than truth; he will always love it better than enquiry; and if falsehood flatters his vanity, will not be very diligent to detect it. Neither ought the English to be much influenced by Scotch authority; for of the past and present state of the whole Earse nation, the Lowlanders are at least as ignorant as ourselves. To be ignorant is painful; but it is dangerous to quiet our uneasiness by the delusive opiate of hasty persuasion (17-8).

Instead of moral sentiments, Johnson sees vanity, seduction and delusion. The “Scotch Authority” is false, as their knowledge of the Earse nation is highly limited and therefore potentially misleading. What Blair sees as Ossian’s virtuous pleasure is for Johnson a “pleasing error,” rife in many narrations associated with the Highlands. It is flattering but misleading to believe the spurious works of Ossian. In fact, for Johnson, one of the real lessons to be learned in the Highlands is the value of rigorous enquiry, taking no claim at face value, and resisting the desire to believe what merely sounds like a good tale.

The issue of moral authority associated with Highland culture was a contentious one. William Shaw, for example, a Gaelic scholar from Arran, disputes Ossian’s authenticity, aligning himself with the quest for truth embodied by Johnson. He notes that even though he will be, like Dr Johnson, accused of “refusing to credit Highland narration,” the more important issue is finding the truth:

[*T*]ruth has always been *dearer* to me than my country. ... I can shew Dr Johnson that there is *one* Scotchman who loves *truth* better than his country, and that I am a *sturdy* enough *moralist* to declare it, though it should mortify my Caledonian vanity (72-3).

Shaw recalls writing a poem which read “pretty smoothly” and claims that “if I had a mind to publish it, it would be no difficult matter to persuade some people I had translated it from the Gaelic” (30). But the issue is turned back into one of simplicity vs. refinement by a fierce opponent of Shaw, the Scottish local historian John Clark (who avoids any overt criticism of Johnson, himself firmly associated with moral education). Clark accuses Shaw of - among other things - bias against the Scots in hopes of finding

English favour (and probably financial gain), not to mention of outright lying and abusing the friendship of Dr Johnson. Moreover, Shaw - whom Clark claims is a corrupt scholar - has a dangerously clever way with words: Clark himself repeatedly draws attention to his own trustworthy "simplicity" in an effort to undermine the duplicitous Shaw. Clark will "pay more regard to the simplicity of fact than the flowers of rhetoric" (6), for example, and instead of an "ostentatious display of argument" will "simply narrate" what really happened. In his defence of Ossian, he continues to criticise Shaw's ornamental style, even associating him with the "affected," and slightly corrupt, neo-classical writers of the early Eighteenth century. Recalling the poem Shaw claimed to have written which could have been passed off for a Gaelic translation, he asserts:

What a pity it is, that Mr Shaw has not condescended to favour us with this *pretty smoothe* piece of composition; and thereby prove himself to be as great a favourite of the Muses, as he tells us he is *a lover of the truth!* ... Had Milton, Dryden, Pope, and the rest of those foolish poets, taken the same precaution, and given us their WORDS in place of their WORKS, for their being good poets, it might have saved their memories from those censures which have sometimes been pronounced against them (62).

Clark's argument is based on criticising Shaw's false and corrupt literary ornament, unlike the simplicity of himself and the Highlanders, avoiding as he does taking on the scholarly issues Shaw and Johnson raise. The battle underlying that over Ossian's authenticity is the moral authority of the Highlands, and who has the right to exploit it.

A similar argument between Shaw and Clarke, for example, is carried out between Anne Grant and the critics of Ossian. In a letter written in 1805 - the same year as a large-scale inquiry was launched into the authenticity of Ossian - Grant attacks the sceptics (she does not attack Johnson, however, probably for reasons similar to those of Clark; elsewhere she applauds his moral stature). She turns the issue at stake again from one of rigorous inquiry to one of emotional truth: Ossian's critics are "intoxicated with applause and self-opinion" (64). They have overlooked the real proof, which is in the feeling with which Ossian has been received: if it were not authentic, it could not communicate to "all of Europe the powerful impulse they are forced to acknowledge"



(64). Grant finishes by asserting her own experiential authority, an authority which she implies is incontrovertible:

Let them live 20 years where I did; let them acquire the language, and know the people; and then, and not till then, I will suppose them qualified to decide this point, and then I will readily abide by their decision (65).

For Grant, experience of the present day Highlanders is authentication enough. She demands that the argument remain on the level of feeling - the only level upon which she can retain her authority, noting that Ossian's critics cannot know much of "human nature" (64). I will discuss how another woman writer, Mary Ann Hanway, attacks Johnson's literary style, attempting to authorise the rhetoric of feeling as the proper way to discuss the Highlands. Grant and others appropriate the "simplicity" associated with Highland culture and use it to construct a literary authority based on both sincere feeling and unornamented style. Experiential authority of the Highlands gives them the right to write, for such writing is of clear didactic value. I began this thesis considering what seems to be the modest literary authority invoked by women writers. But this modesty is only apparent. By writing about feeling, these writers are implicitly claiming to be providing an important public service.

This thesis will explore how women appropriate the discourse of moral sensibility in order to write about the Highlands. In a period during which great attention was given to the problem of promoting sympathy, refining "pleasure" and encouraging "simplicity," women writers claimed they could make an important contribution. However, as I will argue, the authority conferred by claiming to be a didactic writer is not an easy authority, and involves making many problematic assertions. Before I begin a detailed study of these women writers, I will first turn to one of the most influential figures to write about the Highlands, Samuel Johnson.

## Chapter 1: Samuel Johnson and women writers

In a thesis primarily devoted to women writers, it may seem strange to spend much of the first chapter discussing a man, Samuel Johnson. I have chosen to discuss Johnson at the beginning of my thesis for several reasons. First, he is one of the most influential figures of the Eighteenth century, and is particularly influential as a moralist. Second, his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775) was also extremely influential, offering a model of didactic authority which many writers adopted even if they criticised it. Finally, Johnson's *Journey* is a crucial part of the ongoing debate over the role of the Highlands in didactic writing. I will conclude this chapter with a critique of Johnson's approach, a year later, by a woman writer, Mary Anne Hanway.

### Samuel Johnson

The eighteenth century saw the rise of a variety of different kinds of travel, from the "Grand Tour" to scientific expeditions. And travel writing also grew in popularity: Curley notes that "[t]ravel books constitute the second most popular reading matter of the [Eighteenth century]" (48). Scientific travel produced its own brand of travel writing: in 1735 two major scientific projects were undertaken, which, as Pratt observes, would become the subject of vast amounts of writing.<sup>21</sup> Texts produced from these journeys generated the sense of mapping the unknown world, of bringing it under intellectual control.<sup>22</sup> It was scientific travel which most fascinated Samuel Johnson, whose commitment to the Enlightenment notion of progress led him to follow these new scientific developments with keen interest.<sup>23</sup> Johnson was deeply attracted to the new forms of knowledge which were being made available by contemporary expeditions, such as James Cook to the South Seas, James Bruce to Abyssinia, and Phipps to the North Pole (Curley, 17). Not only had he met the principal scientists on Cook's expedition, but Curley notes that "By the end of his life [Johnson] had acquired a vast knowledge of geography from journals, treatises, diaries, logs, letters, memoirs,

chronicles, topographical surveys, atlases, and descriptions of domestic, Continental and remote regions" (52). To Johnson, travel was about producing knowledge, solving the secrets of the natural and human world in all its hidden forms. In Johnson's eyes, furthering the "scientific" understanding of man in his natural and social environment is the real function of the travel narrative.

Johnson is fascinated by travel writing and what it can offer the reader in the way of improvement. He saw it as being no different from other kinds of writing in that it should endeavour to "please and instruct" its readers. But it was a genre which often failed to reach its potential, according to Johnson, who disliked the kind of aesthetic travel writing which was growing in popularity in this period, a discourse in which the writer's impressions of and feelings about the world around him or her were foregrounded. Not only was the traveller's personal experience not interesting to the reader, according to Johnson, but it was somehow less respectable than more "scientific" travel writing. Johnson's writing on the topic attempts to put in place a scientific respectability associated both with the reader's interest and with the writer's goal in travel writing. Travel writing gets cut off from other kinds of literary discourse, most notably the picaresque novel and aesthetic tourism, to resemble more what we would think of today as anthropology.

Part of Johnson's problem lies in the nature of eighteenth century travel writing itself. It had become a complex, multi-faceted genre bringing together a variety of different discourses: at one extreme, it was developing in the direction of the novel, with works like *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews* loosely structured around the picaresque journey. Other travel writers described their experience almost purely in subjective terms, using rhetoric influenced by Ossian or the sublime while giving relatively little other information. Yet other kinds of travel writing, the kind which Johnson preferred, came from scientific expeditions. In some travel narratives, such as Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*, different tendencies, like satire and ethnology, co-exist comfortably within the

same narrative. Johnson, however, felt that the travel narrative was beginning to lose sight of its primary function, which was to produce useful knowledge on the human and natural world. Johnson was opposed to this branching out of travel writing into different discourses - particularly in the direction of the novel, and his writing on the subject is concerned in many ways with "purifying" it back to the scientific discourse which he saw as its origins.

It is worth taking a look at some of Johnson's writing on fiction to see where he places his distinctions about fictional and non-fictional discourse. In *Rambler* 4 (1750) he talks about a new and fashionable brand of "works of fiction" which "exhibit life in its true state" (19). I will here refer to Johnson's notion of this kind of fiction as "realistic writing", being different from non-realistic forms such as what he calls the "romance." The former focuses on the "passions and qualities which are really to be found in conversing with mankind" while the latter depends on "giants," "knights" and "imaginary castles." The subject matter of realistic writing makes it more difficult to write: whereas a writer of romance could "let loose his invention, and heat his mind with incredibilities," a writer of realistic fiction needs "toil of study, ... knowledge of nature [and] acquaintance with life" (20). But the criteria which Johnson uses to judge this kind of fiction do not really hinge so much on its ability to accurately represent the world as it does on its ability to "please and instruct." As such, the criteria for realistic writing are different than those of Romance writing, and - more importantly - the responsibility of the realistic writer is greater.

Johnson is interested in the nature of the reader's attraction to this kind of fiction and how the writer deals with that attraction. Because the reader is attracted by "curiosity without the help of wonder" and forms a different kind of identification with the "adventurer," the writer must evoke "life in its true state" responsibly:

But the fear of not being approved as just copyers of human manners, is not the most important concern that an author of this sort ought to have before him. These

books are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introduction into life (20-1).

The young and untutored reader gets swept into this fiction by identifying with the hero; in fact, “the power of example is so great” that it can “take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will” (22).

The writer, then, must not abuse this power: he must use the reader’s “curiosity” for didactic purposes by “culling” the right events from the adventurer’s experience and transforming them into useful knowledge:

The chief advantage which these fictions have over real life is, that their authors are at liberty, tho’ not to invent, yet to select objects, and to cull from the mass of mankind, those individuals upon which the attention ought most to be employ’d (22).

The writer, then, must act as his own censor, picking out sage topics for description and wielding his descriptive powers carefully. Without this kind of “selection” of events to narrate there is almost no point in writing in the first place:

If the world be promiscuously described, I cannot see of what use it can be to read the account; or why it may not be as safe to turn the eye immediately upon mankind, as upon a mirror which shows all that presents itself without discrimination (22).

For Johnson, then, the reality evoked is more interesting for its ability to give useful information to the reader than for its own texture. Although this writing involves both “learning from books” and “accurate observation” of the world, it is clear that to Johnson the former is more important than the latter. Behind this concern with literary responsibility is a concern with the nature of writing itself: writing should be “for” something, not an end in itself.

Johnson’s rhetoric in 1750 suggests that what he is thinking about when he describes “realistic writing” is the picaresque novel: “we accompany them through their adventures with delight, and are led by degrees to interest ourselves in their favour” (23). Indeed, several critics have argued that Johnson was here referring to *Tom Jones*, with an

implicit comparison to *Clarissa* as a kind of writing in which didacticism proclaims itself as the novel's main agenda. But for Johnson, this is as far as the connection to travel writing goes; this kind of fiction, although representing "life in its true state" more importantly is not tied down by "historical veracity," and so is under the onus to "increase prudence without impairing virtue" (23). There is a possible discomfort here with travel writing being infected with a different kind of non-fictional discourse, a discourse which uses writing for undisclosed purposes. Johnson seems in some ways to be calling for writers to preserve not just a distinction between fiction and non-fiction, but also between travel writing and other kinds of discourse which threaten to turn it into the wrong kind of narrative, one related to "romance" or aesthetic travel writing.

Johnson's desire to keep the literary out of travel writing becomes clearer ten years later in his *Idler* 97 article devoted to travel writing. Although his treatment of travel writing suggests that there may be some similarities to "realistic" fiction in the form of the picaresque novel, the main point of travel writing is more its lack of resemblance to the likes of *Tom Jones* than anything else. These similarities are implicit in his treatment of travel writing: like fictions which represent "life in its true state," travel writing is about the real world and should be designed to satisfy the reader's curiosity; as such it is based in "accurate observation." In addition, the final goal of travel writing should be knowledge of a moral nature rather than the actual texture of the reality it describes; as Johnson notes, it should like other kinds of fiction be called upon to "please and instruct" the reader. In Johnson's thinking, both travel writing and realistic forms should be deployed responsibly, using caution and selection as to the kind of description given of the world.

But there is also a subtle distinction between the two, related to Johnson's notion of literary respectability. Travel writing, according to Johnson, should construct the world as an object of knowledge rather than as a foil for the "adventurer" or the sensibility of the aesthetic tourist. The difference between the writing of realistic novels and travel



writing is one of degree; both readers are curious, but the reader of travel writing is constructed as having a far more respectable kind of curiosity:

One part of mankind is naturally curious to learn the sentiments, manners, and condition of the rest; and every mind that has leisure or power to extend its views, must be desirous of knowing in what proportion Providence has distributed the blessings of nature of the advantages of art, among the several nations of the earth (298).

This curiosity, unlike the more potentially dangerous kind described in *Rambler* 4, seems to be moral in scope: the reader seeks knowledge of a divine order here, a search for a deeper understanding of the ways of God in the world. Johnson constructs it as a respectable desire for respectable knowledge, marked by an implicit Christian egalitarianism to see how “Providence” has divided up “the blessings of nature or the advantages of art.”

Johnson constructs travel writing in terms of respectability in other ways, as well. Where in *Rambler* 4 realistic fiction is seen as working by identification with a roving adventurer, in travel writing there is no such identification at all: the traveller is a producer of knowledge, not him or herself a figure of interest; as such, the traveller should respect the nature of the reader’s curiosity:

The adventurer upon unknown coasts, and the describer of distant regions, is always welcomed as a man who has laboured for the pleasure of others, and who is able to enlarge our knowledge and rectify our opinions; but when the volume is opened, nothing is found but such general accounts as leave no distinct idea behind them, or such minute enumerations as few can read with either profit or delight (298).

The travel writer’s goal should be to gain knowledge on behalf of others, not to be concerned with recording his own impressions or making large scale generalisations. In other words, the travel writer is not a character in his own text; moreover, he needs to construct his writing for the “pleasure” of others. Behind the impersonal style and universal consensus it suggests is an attempt to construct good travel writing as resembling active mental labour rather than passive listing of impressions and response. He ends his essay with the invocation to travel writers to seek to address themselves to



the kind of inherent moral curiosity which characterises the reader of the travel narrative:

He that would travel for the entertainment of others, should remember that the great object of remark is human life. Every nation has something peculiar in its manufactures, its works of genius, its medicines, its agriculture, its customs, and its policy. He only is a useful traveller who brings home something by which his country may be benefited; who procures some supply of want or some mitigation of evil, which may enable his readers to compare their condition with that of others, to improve it whenever it is worse, and whenever it is better to enjoy it (300).

The kinds of knowledge that the traveller should bring back use the experience of travel to improve the reader's own understanding of the human condition. The emphasis on the use-value of travel writing is at the same time an attempt to distinguish it from other kinds of more literary discourse: its status should be as knowledge of a "useful" nature, "remark of human life" rather than another kind of writing which focuses on aesthetic impressions.

The kinds of writing which Johnson does not name are what I will refer to here as aesthetic travel, a variety of discourses which focus on the traveller's impressions and which most often reveal more about the traveller than the place he is visiting. These writers are caught up in what Johnson rather sarcastically calls "delicate sensibility," so much so that according to him they can speak only of "elegance" and "softness" (300). In fact he spends most of this essay describing how *not* to write a travel narrative: "The greater part of travellers tell nothing, because their method of travelling supplies them with nothing to be told," he warns:

He that enters a town at night and surveys it in the morning, and then hastens away to another place, and guesses at the manners of the inhabitants by the entertainment which his inn afforded him, may please himself for a time with a hasty change of scenes, and a confused remembrance of palaces and churches; he may gratify his eye with variety of landscapes; and regale his palate with a succession of vintages; but let him be contented to please himself without endeavour to disturb others. Why should he record excursions by which nothing could be learned, or wish to make a show of knowledge which, without some power of intuition unknown to other mortals, he never could attain (298-9).

What the reader wants is not the writer's impressions, but a sense of the whole, a general

knowledge deduced from observations. Instead, many writers “have no other purpose than to describe the face of the country” (299). They give a series of descriptions with no point of reference: the reader,

may be informed by one of these wanderers, that on a certain day he set out early with the caravan, and in the first hour’s march saw, towards the south, a hill covered with trees, then passed over a stream which ran northward with a swift course... (299).

For Johnson, the ideal method of travelling involves using a kind of mental activity that he calls “reflection”: “Thus he conducts his reader thro’ wet and dry, over rough and smooth, without incidents, without reflections” (299). “Reflection,” in this context, is apparently what allows the writer to achieve the right balance between “accurate observation” and “remark of human life.” But where Johnson seems to be criticising the method of travel - “He that enters a town at night” and does such and so - what he is really criticising is the traveller’s discourse - how he “record[s] excursions.” His essay suggests that travel writing should *sound* more authoritative by suppressing the literary.

If he was rejecting many of the existing models of travel writing, with what was he replacing them? When he set out to write his own *Journey*, Johnson had a very different kind of model in mind, one based on contemporary expedition writing, writing whose “scientific” agenda used an impersonal, objective discourse. Boswell recalls that Johnson rated seven contemporary travel narratives on a scale of good to bad: the worst was Richard Pococke’s *Description of the East* (1743), most likely for its poor style, while the best was Patrick Brydone’s *Tour Through Sicily and Malta* (1773), probably because it used scientific methodology to study native manners (614). Also, he was greatly influenced by Martin Martin’s *A Voyage to St. Kilda* which had listed a variety of Highland geographical and cultural phenomena in 1698.<sup>24</sup> And Johnson was well aware of the possibility of taking a scientific methodology on a travel expedition: The Royal Society had published a checklist of geographical and cultural phenomena to aid exploration of foreign countries; Johnson knew this by heart and had this in mind when he set out to write his *Journey*.<sup>25</sup> His rejection of literary discourse in travel writing

suggests his belief that travel writing should be based on pure observation and “reflection,” although in fact this belief turns out to be problematic in his own writing.

But while he was attracted to the idea of travel writing as providing both moral and scientific knowledge through the right kind of methodology, he was not particularly well-equipped to gather scientific information. He had neither the background nor the equipment to bring back the kind of knowledge his authoritative discourse demanded. In his attempt to put all his beliefs into practice a decade later, when he wrote about his own Journey to the Highlands, he had to compete with a number of other texts, which had already observed, measured and recorded much about the Highlands. Not only, then, does Johnson have to suppress different kinds of literary discourse in his writing, he also has to invoke scientific ones which conceal the absence of real scientific knowledge. Thus his technique of “reflection,” turning details and observations into generalizations and “knowledge”, must foreground his “scientific” methodology in the exploration of geographic and cultural phenomena. In his desire to deploy this discourse, he constructs an authorial persona whose concern for rendering accurately his observations draws attention away from certain underlying anxieties over the success of his project. Moreover, these travel narratives have little of the didactic in them. Although he had constructed the ideal travel narrative as being essentially moral in nature it appealed in fact to his sense of adventure and desire to penetrate the unknown. Much of his attraction to the Highlands was an imaginative one, mediated by other kinds of texts which were hardly as scientific as the kind of text he wanted to be writing.

In his desire to construct the Highlands as an object of knowledge, Johnson is part of a larger Enlightenment project which Mary Louis Pratt sees as attempting to construct the world as “chaos out of which the scientist *produced* an order” (30). He authors himself as an Enlightenment figure on an information-seeking expedition, a traveller to the Highlands and Western Islands who is bringing apparently scientific order to the unmapped Highlands. He aligns himself with the English, who brought the first

semblance of progress and civilisation to regions of Scotland: "Til the Union made them acquainted with English manners, the culture of their lands was unskillful, and their domestick life unformed; their tables were coarse as the feasts of Eskimeaux, and their houses as filthy as the cottages of Hottentots" (57). He watches for chaos and "uselessness," and tries to plan out new methods of progress. The Highland hills, for example, give "[t]he appearance ... of matter incapable of form or usefulness, dismissed by nature from her care and disinherited of her favours, left in its original elemental state, or quickened only with one sullen power of useless vegetation" (39-40); elsewhere, he spends much time thinking of ways to improve agriculture. Johnson repeats several times the need for progress and the threat of "uselessness" of the landscape, and it is part of his own project to impose shape and order. In his narration, the Highlands are begging to be mapped and improved.

With this discourse he assumes an impersonal authority to go from specific detail to panoramic generalisation in the proverbial wink of an eye. In fact, his own gaze seems to bring order to this chaotic world: he uses what sounds like an observational methodology to "fix" cultural and geographical boundaries. "At Nairne," he writes, "we may fix the verge of the Highlands; for here I first saw peat fires, and first heard the *Erse* language" (25). Johnson borrows the impersonal voice of science ("we"): his observations seem unanchored in any single subjectivity. He apparently "fixes" the world around him in a series of facts although his use of the word "may" reflects the arbitrariness of his own task.

Johnson attempts to sustain this impersonal scientific tone throughout the *Journey*. He focuses much attention on his methodology, projecting the problems related to suppressing the wrong kind of literary discourse onto methodological issues. He draws attention to his careful attempts to distinguish truth from error, almost as if the *source* of his information is more important than the information itself. After a brief description of the kind of shoes worn in regions of the Highlands, and he goes on to meditate at some

length:

My inquiries about brogues, gave me an early specimen of Highland information. One day I was told, that to make brogues was a domestick art ... till next day it was told me, that a brogue-maker was a trade. ... It will easily occur that these representations may both be true, and that, in some places, men may buy them, and in others, make them for themselves; but I had both the accounts in the same house within two days (50).

In admitting his failure to reconcile two different versions of the same information, Johnson is simultaneously foregrounding his efforts to be precise and accurate. He spends much time considering the nature of the information, implicitly pointing out his ability to weigh different versions of the same tale. In fact, his ability to distinguish between fact and fiction at times becomes a central tension in his text, a submerged quest in which he is in apparent conflict with a cultural and geographic landscape which seems to threaten to destabilise the quasi-scientific nature of his text. But there is another issue behind what seems to be the difficulty of coming by accurate information. His scientific-sounding discourse seeks to shadow the fact that his material is not particularly scientific, and is based more on the “minute enumerations” upon which he claimed other writers depended. Scientific methodology substitutes for science: the conflict here is not really so much with the Highlanders as it is with his own quasi-scientific discourse.

The Highlanders, with their chaotic oral discourse, take on the charge of unreliable narration: Johnson, by contrast, seems to be on guard against the “uncertain” stories available from the Highlanders. When he recalls hearing that Loch Ness never freezes over, for example, he reflects on the nature of information available in the Highlands, and the need to be careful in judging it:

That which is strange and delightful, and a pleasing error, is not willingly detected. Accuracy of narration is not very common, and there are few so rigidly philosophical, as not to represent as perpetual, what is only frequent (31).

He goes on to meditate on “scientific” reasons why Loch Ness might never freeze over: “if it be true that Loch Ness never freezes,” there must be a logical reason, such as its being “sheltered by its high banks from the cold blasts,” or that it is kept in “perpetual

motion by incoming water" (31). In this passage it seems as if the landscape is trying to seduce him into "pleasing error," but his "rigid philosophy" resists what is almost likened to a possibility of infecting his text with the wrong discourse. Once again, scientific discourse comes to stand in for science itself: in spite of his lack of scientific data, Johnson's discourse sounds more authoritative than his representation of theirs. Here he is not just defining himself against the Highlanders (implying that if they are not "rigidly philosophical" then he must be), he is also suppressing what is perhaps a sneaking desire to tell a good story, a sense that he has not completely banished literary discourse out of his own text.<sup>26</sup>

Johnson describes what almost seems like a contest of will between the dangerously seductive "pleasing error" available, and his belief in truth - clearly, this is a contest he is bound to win. For example he complains that it is easy to "saturate [the] soul with intelligence" in the Highlands, if the listener will "acquiesce in the first account" (51). Sometimes, he writes, a Highlander's answer to a question is so "prompt and peremptory" that "skepticism itself is dared into silence" and the listener's mind "sinks before the bold reporter in unresisting credulity." But, he claims, this enthrallment is broken with mental activity: a second question "breaks the enchantment" when it becomes clear that the apparent certainty of the answer was an attempt to cover either negligence or ignorance (51). Whereas at first he depicts a traveller in the third person as being passively overcome by these aggressively stated "facts," the dynamic is turned around when the speaker himself occupies the position of authority while the Highlander's "conversation" is "lax" and "mingled together" (51). There is a submerged narrative here, which is the story of Johnson's literary authority. In this narrative, Johnson's literary anxieties are both reflected and apparently resolved: his quest for the truth about the Highlands is fraught with obstacles, but his determination and resistance to all manner of seduction is ultimately successful.

Critics have failed to address Johnson's attempt to suppress aesthetic/impressionistic



writing in favour of the more scientific/anthropological “expedition” writing in the *Journey*. They usually find it to be a more or less successful attempt to be objective, not a literary text faced with the problem of trying to suppress its own literariness. The two critics who have written most about his *Journey*, see it as a successful attempt to be objective: Pat Rogers commends his “ability to marshal facts and his readiness to enter into the texture of the lives he has come to inspect” (*Samuel Johnson*, 103). Thomas Curley similarly notes that he was “Guided by scientific techniques of exploration,” and in his *Journey* “would now rely on direct observation to validate the lessons of his moral literature” (184). Both see no gap between his ideal travel narrative and the *Journey* itself, assuming that all his claims of objectivity can be taken at face value.

One critic who does attempt to read the *Journey* as literary text, Bernard Bronson, reads it against other texts by Johnson and Boswell. Bronson finds a submerged fascination with a notion of “Old Scotland” in a comparative study of Johnson’s *Journey* and *Rasselas*. According to Bronson, Johnson felt “the weight of his responsibility as a faithful reporter, aware of what he would and did ask of other travellers in their published accounts” and he allows “scant room for the play of fancy” (171). But Bronson finds that what Johnson *did* attempt to suppress was an imaginative attraction to a notion of “Old Scotland”. Bronson finds, for example, a recurring “motif” of Johnson fantasising himself as a Highland Laird, a response which gets written out of the *Journey*.<sup>27</sup> Although he may have disliked the use of literary discourse in other travel writers, Johnson was hardly innocent of any kind of literary influence in his own writing.

Bronson examines the *Journey*’s connection to an earlier work of fiction by Johnson, *Rasselas*, suggesting that there is a similar play of the imagination in both. Bronson argues that *Rasselas* “resembles, though far less energetically, Johnson in his own demeanor on the imaginative and observant journey through the Highlands with Boswell” (168). He further finds that

Johnson’s primary purpose in undertaking the Highland expedition was to



consolidate his opinions, test his earlier conjectures, and formulate his judgment by firsthand observation of the merits and demerits of a system of life which he had long idealized. In a true sense, he was projecting an imaginary journey into the past, into the ways of another age, a feudal society and a strange environment that would literally transport him from the familiar and contemporary and enable him to make valid comparisons with a different system of life against which he could measure the worth of familiar actualities (169-70).

But although Bronson's analysis raises some interesting points, it oversimplifies the relationship between the two texts. In fact, like most other critics, he associates Johnson's objective "purpose" unproblematically with the resulting text. In the *Journey*, Johnson was, according to Bronson, "Testing his fascination with feudal society," mapping his expectations against the reality of the Highlands, as if such a comparison was by no means problematic. Like most other critics, Bronson takes Johnson's claims to objectivity at face value, although he admits that Johnson had previously "idealized" the Highlands. He sees the significant difference between the *Journey* and *Rasselas* as being how Johnson tests imagination against reality, not as a textual problem of keeping the imaginative journey out of the real one.

Bronson examines in particular one passage in which *Rasselas* echoes the *Journey*. In *Rasselas* the "Happy Valley" is described as having "overhanging mountains, from which rivulets descended to fill the valley with verdure and fertility"; in this valley *Rasselas* is bored and wants to leave. A passage in the *Journey* recalls Johnson being in a:

narrow valley, not very flowery, but sufficiently verdant ... I sat down on a bank, such as a writer of romance might have delighted to feign. I had indeed no trees to whisper over my head, but a clear rivulet streamed at my feet ... Before me, and on either side, were high hills, which by hindering the eye from ranging, forced the mind to find entertainment for itself (40).

The language and setting here is similar, and Bronson suggests this is a point of identification between Johnson and *Rasselas*. But what Bronson does not observe is that this is rather more of a *distinction* than an identification. Johnson was in a valley which a "writer of Romance" *might* have liked, but the conditional tense makes it clear that he is

*not* a writer of romance. Thus this comment about Romance evokes the response to the landscape he might have felt, but banishes it to another kind of text, a text which he is very clearly *not* writing. Here Johnson seems to be slipping inadvertently into his text, and he steps back to analyse what it means to be sitting in this kind of a valley in philosophical terms: “yet the imaginations excited by the view of an unknown and untravelled wilderness are not such as arise in the artificial solitude of parks and gardens.... The phantoms which haunt a desert are want, and misery, and danger...” (40-1). One might suspect that Johnson himself was feeling uncomfortable, even vulnerable at this moment; but he converts these feelings from the personal (“Before me, and on either side”) into the general (“by hindering the eye”) in a single sentence. With this strategy, Johnson gets the best of both worlds, referring indirectly to his feelings, but then reminding both himself and his reader that this is not the kind of text his is supposed to be writing.

In fact, it is at this critical moment that Johnson claims to have decided to write his *Journey*: “It was during this hour that I conceived the idea for this narration,” he writes in the next sentence. It is impossible to be certain whether or not it was really during this hour that he conceived of writing the *Journey*: more likely, he thought of doing it before he even undertook the trip to the Highlands itself. At the point when the *Journey* appeared to be momentarily infected with the same kind of literary discourse of personal response which he criticised other writers for using, Johnson again rhetorically rescues it with mental activity. His *Journey* then appears to originate in this moment of banishing intimate feelings to another kind of text, the “Romance.” It is as if Johnson is implicitly claiming that the *Journey* was born in a moment of victory over other kinds of discourses. This is the real conflict in the narrative: although at times Johnson constructs himself as being in conflict with the Highlanders, the real conflict is with himself, and his repressed desire to represent his experience in non-scientific, potentially more “literary” terms.

His own response seems to slip into the *Journey* elsewhere, but is described in general terms again, as if to imply it is not of himself that he is speaking. Recalling a trip from Talisker during “the gloom of the evening,” he writes:

In travelling even thus almost without light thro’ naked solitude, when there is a guide whose conduct may be trusted, a mind not naturally too much disposed to fear, may preserve some degree of cheerfulness; but what must be the solicitude of him who should be wandering, among the craggs and hollows, benighted, ignorant, and alone? (77)

This sounds like a philosophical description of the nature of travel in unknown parts but is really an attempt to represent his own experience in authoritative discourse. Johnson is apparently not talking about his own imaginative response to this experience, but rather a kind of “general” response that “the traveller” would feel. However, to evoke the nature of this response, he invokes a different kind of text, the Gothick Romance:

The fictions of the Gothick romances were not so remote from credibility as they are now thought. In the full prevalence of the feudal institution, when violence desolated the world, and every baron lived in a fortress, forests and castles were regularly succeeded by each other ... Whatever is imaged in the wildest tale, if giants, dragons, and enchantment be excepted, would be felt by him, who, wandering in the mountains without a guide ... to the hospitality and elegance of Raasay or Dunvegan (77).

Johnson weighs the ability of the “Gothick Romance” to represent aspects of life in the Highlands, and in so doing he demonstrates his own ability to distinguish the fictional from the real. But at the same time, this reference to the Gothic suggests an aspect of his experience which he cannot bring into his otherwise “scientific” text.

Thus there is a conflict between Johnson’s experience, his imaginative associations with the Highlands and his attempt to represent them in scientific, authoritative discourse. The skill of using “reflections,” that which would allow him to find a balance between small-scale observations and large-scale knowledge, seems to elude his grasp and at one point he almost apologises for losing control of this balance. His belief that travel writing is a genre which should produce knowledge for consumption seems to falter when faced with the need to record “diminutive observations”:

These diminutive observations seem to take away something from the dignity of writing, and therefore are never communicated but with hesitation, and a little fear of abasement and contempt. But it must be remembered, that life consists not of a series of illustrious actions, or elegant enjoyments; the greater part of our time passes in compliance with necessities, in the performance of daily duties, in the removal of small inconveniences, in the procurement of petty pleasures; and we are well or ill at ease, as the main stream of life glides on smoothly, or is ruffled by small obstacles and frequent interruption (22).

Although once again this seems to be a defence of his methodology, it is really giving voice to the dislocation between his discourse and his experience. There is a conflict between his own notion of writing as something large scale, related to morality and knowledge, which clashes with the need to make “accurate observation” in order to invoke a sense of “life as it is.” There is the sense here that his ideal travel writing model may be greater than the sum of its parts, the attempt to suppress his own response in favour of “knowledge” makes it difficult to record his material - which essentially consists of “diminutive observations.” He has to remind us that these details are worthwhile in the interests of the larger picture: they are minor details of cultural difference which “reflection” turns into larger knowledge: he claims he can only represent “the main stream of life” by examining those “small obstacles” which distort it. He almost seems to be having second thoughts about his notion that the “reality” invoked is less important than the knowledge “culled” from it.

The last lines of the *Journey* even further suggests a sense that he relied too much on a scientific discourse, which in the end may somehow have failed him:

Such are the things which this journey has given me an opportunity of seeing, and such are the reflections which that sight has raised. Having passed my time almost wholly in cities, I may have been surprised by modes of life and appearances of nature, that are familiar to men of wider survey and more varied conversation. Novelty and ignorance must always be reciprocal, and I cannot but be conscious that my thoughts on national manners, are the thoughts of one who has seen but little (164).

This seems to be approaching an admission that his interest in the Highlands may have been sparked by something other than the desire to provide moral improvement for his

readers. Rather the interest is related to “novelty” and “ignorance” - perhaps a suggestion that he has momentarily been drawn to the lure of the fictional, not the production of knowledge. In fact, he seems to have some qualms about the whole comparative nature of his *Journey*: his lack of knowledge led to an interest in certain aspects, so ultimately his own response is part of the text, no matter how much he has tried to write it out. Moreover, there is the suggestion here that perhaps in spite of his authoritative tone, the comment that he has seen “but little” suggests that there is a reality beyond what he can explain in his *Journey*, that the material itself has somehow resisted his appropriation. The promised knowledge of the “ways of Providence” is perhaps not so easily obtainable, in spite of his claim to offer an objective discourse.

### Mary Anne Hanway

These final lines of Samuel Johnson become the subject of a much different kind of tour conducted by a woman writer a year later. The very title of Mary Anne Hanway’s *A Journey Through the Highlands of Scotland, With Occasional Remarks on Dr Johnson’s Tour; by a Lady* (1776), indicates a literary dependence on Johnson’s *Journey* - in this case, as I will argue below, a kind of parasitic attack on what is constructed as his literary failure. Hanway quotes Johnson’s admission of textual anxiety as evidence that he failed in his task adequately to represent the Highlands. This strategy allows her to describe her own literary project as being one of correcting his unfair misrepresentation:

“... Novelty and ignorance must always be reciprocal, and I cannot but be conscious that my thoughts on national manners are of one who hath seen but little.” I perfectly agree with him in the truth contained in every line of the above quotation; and I am sensible, if, on my return to England, I deliver my opinions, as freely as I have written them to your Lordship, I shall lay myself open to criticism; but I shall not fear it, as nothing but justice for the oppressed, could have obliged me to have spoken my sentiments on Dr J--’s historical *Ramble*; and, for that, I have, though a woman, fortitude enough to stand any attack from the pens of *such* critics, in the defence of *our mountainous neighbours* (158-9).

Hanway is not really addressing the complex textual issues Johnson raised in his final words; rather, she is contesting Johnson’s authority in order to make way for her own

feminine authority based on a rhetoric of feeling, even suggesting that her writing is a corrective to his. She is using Johnson's literary anxieties to offset her own anxieties of writing as a woman: "though a woman," she can defend herself for writing in the altruistic interests of speaking for those who have been "opprest" by Johnson's misrepresentations. But what is apparently a concern about the misrepresentation "of *our mountainous neighbours*" and an "intention ... to give a just representation" is more accurately an attempt to construct her own alternative literary authority out of a criticism of Johnson's literary authority. This allows her to claim to be "[s]peaking my sentiments" to rescue the Highlands from Johnson. By discussing the issue of how best to represent the Highlands, she creates her own authority based on a rejection of that of Johnson's discourse. Her strategy is to take what Johnson constructs as methodological issues and to recast them as issues of feeling and experience to which she, as a woman, has more access than Johnson. What is for Johnson a problem of knowledge (speaking while having seen "but little") is for Hanway a problem of feeling (speaking her "sentiments" in spite of the "fear" of criticism and loss of respectability).

Hanway has by no means the intellectual stature of Samuel Johnson, so in many respects a comparison can only find in his favour. However, her reaction to Johnson, as she sets out her own project of writing the Highlands, reveals a great deal, not just about the difficulties faced by women writers, but also how many women were competing for access to the literary marketplace, bringing a kind of "feminine sentimentalism" into the depiction of the Highlands as an alternative form of literary authority. She is angry that Johnson has constructed his authority out of the rejection of the only kind of authority that was available to her as a woman, a genre loosely based partially on the "sentimental journey" tradition associated with Laurence Sterne and partially on the variety of Highland discourses which had constructed the Highlands since mid-century. Choosing from among this variety of discourses, Hanway implies that the only correct representation of the Highlands is through a discourse of sentimentalism, an attempt to represent the intense feelings brought on by a vision of the sublime or picturesque





Highlands. Hanway's goal then is to reclaim literary discourse for travel writing, particularly writing about the Highlands, which allows her, as a woman, to construct an alternative authority to that of Johnson.

Uncomfortable with writing with all its associations as a male activity, Hanway uses the *Journey's* vulnerability to the charge of bias to launch both her critique and her own "alternative" script. Following its publication, Johnson's *Journey* was criticised extensively for anti-Scottish bias: the Reverend Don M'Nicol's *Remarks on Dr. Samuel Johnson's Journey to the Hebrides* (1779), for example, was longer than Johnson's own *Journey* and criticised him extensively for bias. Similarly, Thomas Curley notes that the *Weekly Magazine* carried at least 6 abusive critiques over a 3 month period (218). Hanway enters into the fray, making similar challenges to Johnson's text. She calls the *Journey* "pedantic" (64), "high-flown" (64), "false" (65), written with a pen dipped in "gall" (66), and adds towards the end of her own *Journey* that it is a pity

he had not contented himself with *writing Ramblers*, instead of *taking a ramble*; he either was guided in his descriptions by unjust partiality, which ought not to be the case with any writer; or he was totally unfit for the task he undertook" (157/8).

Although she claims that she "can not help joining the chorus of ironical approbation for the edifying remarks of the great D. J--" (51) as "the subject hath fallen [her] way," it is probably more likely that the opportunity of "joining the chorus" was rather a way into her own text than it was a literary coincidence. This allows her to appear to be doing no more than echoing what other writers have said, rather than taking responsibility herself.

But although Hanway is apparently criticising Johnson's "unjust partiality," if anything, she is actually more biased against the Scots than he is; although she claims to be defending "*our mountainous neighbours*," part of the cultural stereotype she is using includes the eighteenth-century stereotype of the Scot as dirty, unrefined and poorly dressed - she finds the men ill-mannered and the weather insufferable. As well, she criticises Scottish women for being unfeminine: they are too tall (she compares them to



Swift's Brobdingnags), they are half-naked (often wearing neither shoes nor stays), and they are too fit (she disapprovingly recalls hearing the story of a woman who climbed Ben Nevis and did not even appear to be tired afterwards). Compared to this catalogue of transgressions, she characterises herself by contrast as a Lilliputian, modestly dressed and easily exhausted, a proper English lady shocked by the uncouth Scots.

Where Johnson attempts to create authority by suppressing the kind of discourse which he associated with representing his own response, Hanway brings this kind of discourse back with a vengeance. She depicts Johnson's attempted suppression of the literary in his text as a failure on his part to properly experience the Highlands. Like Johnson, Hanway suggests that there is a right and a wrong way to travel. While Johnson saw others' "method of travelling" as not equipping them to generate any new knowledge, Hanway describes Johnson as a "closet traveller" who is unable to give either an interesting or accurate description of the Highlands because of his "unjust partiality." She notes that her own mode of travel was significantly different:

I resolved to travel rather critically than casually, rather to accommodate my friends with information than merely to gratify the greediness of vacant curiosity. The consequences were, I did not suffer the postilion to indulge his professional passion to pass briskly through any parts of cultivated country, or rattle rapidly over the pavement of towns, that were fertile of remark, but ordered him to go *sentimentally*; in a word I rode *pencil in hand*, employing myself in drawing a sketch of the landscape, whether of hill or valley, morass or mountain, as it lay before me (Preface).

There are some interesting echoes of Johnson's *Idler* article on travel writing here. Many of her notions recall his: her claim to be "employing" herself to "accommodate my friends" recalls Johnson's notion of the traveller as being someone who "labours for others." The depiction of the reader's curiosity is also similar. Hanway does not want to fulfil the "greediness of vacant curiosity" while Johnson sees this fulfilment as being a desire for a kind of knowledge of the ways of Providence, distinct from the "curiosity without wonder" that characterises realistic literary discourse. There is a vague claim to a didactic authority which, however unsupported by textual evidence, allows her to

appear to be not employing an inappropriate form of authority. In spite of her alliteration and attempts to be whimsical, Hanway remains modest about her own literariness, trying to appear respectable and domestic.

But if Hanway echoes Johnson, she also gets him wrong. Her misreading of Johnson is probably intentional, allowing herself to construct a new authority out of a challenge to his. Johnson sees these techniques as ways of knowing foreign peoples while Hanway associates knowledge with feeling: “travelling ... critically” becomes, a few sentences later, “going ... *sentimentally*.” Where Johnson saw a conflict between “reflection” and “delicate sensibility,” this apparent conflict dissolves in Hanway’s writing, because the knowledge itself she claims to have is treated as emerging from feeling. In a reversal of Johnson, travelling “critically” becomes a refusal to use the kind of “reflection” or mental activity he claims is necessary for writing a useful travel narrative. For Hanway, then, the work of travel writing involves moving from observation to feeling, not exactly what Johnson might have meant by the words “travelling *critically*.” She appropriates this authority into her own version of female literary sentimentalism.

Hanway’s claim to travel “sentimentally” is part of her construction of her text as modestly feminine, evolving her female authority out of a rejection of Johnson’s authority. Not only is she apparently labouring for others, but is also writing her experience “as it happens,” with an attentiveness to feeling and response: she claims to have decided to set out to travel “*pencil in hand*,” “drawing the landscape as it appeared before me,” as if her literary activity is closer to drawing or sketching than it is to writing.

Hanway is making some interesting statements about her own writing practice, then: she is claiming an experiential authority, merely describing her experience as it occurs, giving a more realistic and accurate impression than Johnson. She criticises Johnson’s excessively authoritative discourse, what she calls a “pedantic” and “high flown” style,

and then refuses to take any such responsibility herself: she is only travelling “*pencil in hand*,” seeking impressionistic experience. Where Johnson’s text was predetermined, according to Hanway, by a variety of factors - “unfitness” for the task and bias against the Scots - Hanway claims to have no such predetermination, presenting a document coming from a free-floating “pencil.”

There are further differences between Johnson’s and Hanway’s text. There is an implicit claim in Hanway’s text that her writing is “unliterary” because it is in a letter form. Her letters seem to be an effusion of feeling, written on the spot as an emotion takes hold of her. Moreover, it appears that these letters were originally not intended for publication, whereas Johnson’s narrative had every intention of this all along. Another important difference is that Johnson claimed to have “conceived of this narration” as a result of his mind having had to find “entertainment for itself” in an uninteresting landscape. Unlike his text originating out of a moment of mental triumph, Hanway displaces this responsibility elsewhere. Having sent back her letters from her travels, she writes in her Preface that she was amazed to find that they had been collected and prepared for publication:

I was not a little surprised, (and I am woman enough to own, not a little pleased) to find those running papers which were trusted to the post very favourable, received by those to whom they were addressed. Nay, how shall I escape betraying the symptoms of vanity, when I further observed that Lady X had taken the pains, by the clue which the knowledge of my connexions gave her, to obtain copies from every other correspondent, and to put the little bundle, thus affectionately collected, into the hands of a literary gentleman? (ix-x).

As with the origin of Johnson’s decision, such a claim does not have to be taken at face value. But what is significant is that what Johnson depicts to have been an active decision – deciding to publish a record of his experiences - is a decision which for Hanway is apparently taken by others. Her only contribution to her letters’ publication appears to have been emotional (feeling and a charming, self-deprecating vanity). Her participation in the publication of her own text is limited - the persona she constructs appears to be both unambitious and unauthoritative, its main authority coming out of an

ability to feel.

Hanway uses this notion of modest female feelings to construct an alternative authority based on her refusal of Johnsonian literary authority. In a Dedication to the "Earl of Seaforth," she constructs a speaker who, by abdicating textual responsibility, seeks to place herself beyond criticism by implying an emotional and literary vulnerability while at the same time using her ability to feel as a means of drawing attention to her positive sensibility:

The timidity which naturally attends a young author on presenting her first attempts to the public is obvious; and will, I hope, plead her excuse for the ambition of wishing your Lordship to patronize them; for whom indeed, could an inexperienced candidate for fame so properly fly for shelter, as to *him*, whose taste and approbation will give it *eclat*, and success, in the world, and whose politeness and candour will excuse the errors of a female and unpractised pen?

This kind of deflection of responsibility to a greater male authority is so common as to be hardly worth pointing out. But what is interesting is Hanway's strategy: constructing herself as needing male authority to justify her writing also implies her own distance from literary responsibility. Her pen is "female and unpractised," suggesting a parallel between the two in which the rejection of one kinds of authority enables her to invoke another. Her use of a domestic metaphor is also significant: her fear of inappropriate female authority is likened to a vulnerability in "the world," as if she has potentially transgressed the natural domestic sphere associated with women. She attempts to deflect this inappropriate authority onto a man, the Earl of Seaforth, to whom she goes for "shelter" of a literary nature.

She further distances herself from inappropriate authority by foregrounding passive feeling over any active role in textual production:

--I caught up the first sheet, and was really delighted--I collected every fair proof as it came out, and saw my letters swelling gradually into a volume, with a newborn rapture which always attends the juvenile mind on such occasions-- (xi).

Writing and female modesty come together here in a flurry of childlike feeling, : the

“delight” and “newborn” rapture of the “juvenile mind.” Like her claims to being “inexperienced” and “unpractised,” the description of these feelings is a potentially cynical attempt to set herself up as seeming so innocent and vulnerable that only a heartless and ungallant critic would challenge her for allowing her text to be published. Her pleased amazement at being mistaken for a *real* author is a further distancing of herself from the wrong kind of authority. Friends are responsible for publishing her letters, while she appears to be largely motivated by the spontaneity of natural, childlike feeling rather than the more mundane concern with the pragmatics of writing. This conflation of feeling and writing becomes a form of authority which undermines Johnson’s “pedantic” writing at the same time as it allows her to contrast it against a more modest kind of authority.

Thus Hanway can claim that she must correct Johnson because he travelled with his intellectual baggage, not with feeling. She suggests that his desire to impress the reader with his knowledge involves taking on a false mantle of authority:

... as a *learned* and elaborate traveller, in his usual pomp of phraseology with great *scrupulosity* of *minute investigation* observes, ‘where there are many mountains, there will always be much rain, and the torrents pouring down into the intermediate spaces, seldom find to ready an outlet, as not to stagnate, till they have broken the texture of the ground’. The philosophy, as well as the philology of this passage, is, to be sure, very profound, and means, pretty near as much, as many other parts of this investigator’s visionary journey (49-50).

She also criticises his “ingenious and important informations,” which have “already attracted the ridicule of our acute English critics” (50). Hanway appears to be attacking Johnson’s method of travelling, as he criticises those of others, sarcastically calling him a “*learned* and elaborate traveller” who has “great *scrupulosity* of *minute investigation*.” Hanway’s critique of Johnson for his inappropriate, pompous discourse suggests that her own impressions are unbiased by this kind of attempt to sound scientific.

She compares her text with Johnson’s on the grounds of sensibility: positive and unmediated feeling is what produces the best representation of the landscape, according

to Hanway. This kind of sensibility, she makes clear, is the origin of her own writing on the Highlands. She makes an implicit comparison between her openness to the landscape and his lack of it. She follows the above critique of Johnson with the feelings evoked by these same mountains:

There is something exquisite to me, even in the *cadence* of a cascade: as I listened to it in this captivating spot, I really felt my imagination expand, and if I had any thing of the bard in my composition, this would have been the moment of inspiration (50-1).

Hanway replaces Johnson's scientific analysis of "*perpendicularly tubulated*" (sic) mountains with the discourse of sentimentalism, describing her own "expanding imagination" as evidence of her strong impression. Apparently overwhelmed by her own response, she is even unable to describe it. Seemingly too modest to attempt to author her own response (not having anything of the "bard in my composition"), she falls back on an authority of experience. In fact, there is an authority here in the inability fully to depict her experience: her feelings appear to have been so intense that she did not have the verbal mastery to depict them. She also appears to be open to experience where Johnson is not, giving herself an authority for feeling, if not for expressing.

Another passage makes a further comparison between her openness to the landscape and Johnson's inability to "feel" it. Remarking of her love of Scotland's "many noble rivers," she depicts herself as being fully able to appreciate what she sees in front of her instead of moaning about what is absent:

I think one of the greatest beauties that Scotland eminently possesses, is, their many noble rivers, which is, a full compensation for that general want of wood which is complained of by *unsatisfied* travellers; that, are so far from being contented with the prospect before them, they must forsooth, have towns and countries made on purpose to please them, or else they exclaim against art and nature, even for presenting them with that very variety, which constitutes the greatest entertainment. Nor do these querulous gentlemen seem to reflect that, if the face of the earth was naturally uniform; if destitute of that diversity, which it derives from the hill and valley, the barren heath, and the blooming garden, there would neither be any motive to excite the curiosity of the traveller, nor, perhaps, any incentive for one country to connect itself *commercially* with another (62-3).



The “*unsatisfied*” and “querulous gentleman” referred to here is clearly Johnson, who according to Hanway can do little more than “exclaim against art and nature.” Hanway’s misrepresentation of Johnson sets him up as an easy target out of which to generate her own alternative authority. In spite of his earlier construction of the curiosity associated with travel as being essentially moral in nature. Johnson the traveller now lacks the right kind of “curiosity” according to Hanway: his refusal to appreciate Scotland’s “diversity” means that he misses the “greatest entertainment” on offer. Needless to say, Johnson and Hanway mean two different things by “diversity”: for Johnson it is cultural and geographical, judged for its “usefulness” and improvability, whereas for Hanway it is aesthetic, judged for its ability to produce feeling. Hanway redefines what is meant by “curiosity” and “diversity,” implying her own knowledge of both far surpasses that of Johnson.

Hanway thus refuses Johnson’s model for travel writing and describes instead her own alternative “*chequer-work*” model. Writing about her journey afforded a pleasure which,

not only make amends for those occasional glooms which seemed to breathe the spirit of melancholy, from the surrounding barrenness, but gave to the *whole* that sort of *chequer-work*, which, inevitably mixes with every business, and every pleasure, in the circumscribed *Journey of Life* (Preface).

Where Johnson misses the “greatest entertainment” in his attempt to provide “large scale” knowledge, Hanway claims to be attempting to recreate the texture of her experience. The experience which forms part of the “*chequer-work*” will depict the “*whole*,” the great “*Journey of Life*.” There is an echo of Johnson’s notion of making “remark of human life” in Hanway’s words which here reflects a rather hypocritical literary parasitism: her authority, like Johnson’s, seems to come out of rejection of what has come before. But where Johnson does struggle with a variety of complex textual issues, Hanway criticises Johnson without attempting to give any kind of a substantial replacement. His scientific discourse is misplaced but she is uncomfortable with any kind of substantial alternative textual responsibility.



## Chapter 2: Anne Grant's *Letters from the Mountains*

Anne Grant would probably have characterised Mary Anne Hanway's writing as being "artificial" and "ornamented," embodying the false refinements of the urban sphere. Throughout her life, Grant uses her experience of living in the Highlands to claim that her writing embodies rural virtue and that it educates by the simple feelings which inspire it. Grant's construction of a feminine didactic authority out of her Highland experience becomes an influential model for other women writing about the Highlands: by the early Nineteenth century, at least two other women invoke Grant as an authority, a dignified and morally upright writer with whom they are pleased to be associated.<sup>28</sup>

Grant lived a life which was both isolated and lonely. She was born Anne Macvicar on the 21st of February, 1755. At her birth she was immediately sent to her Grandmother's house near Fort William where she spent the first 18 months of her life, after which she was returned to her parents in Glasgow. Several months later, her father went to America under an army commission; a year later, Anne and her mother followed. They settled in Charleston for a year, after which they moved to Pittsburgh. They returned to Scotland in 1768 on Macvicar's half-pay and they settled in Glasgow for several years. In 1773 Macvicar was offered the office of Barrack-master of Fort Augustus. Anne Grant stayed there with her parents for six years, writing a series of letters which would become the body of *Letters from the Mountains*. At the age of 24, in 1779, she married the clergyman of Laggan (who strangely remains both silent and unnamed in her letters), and accompanied him back to Laggan. Between her marriage in 1779 and her husband's death in 1801, Grant bore many children. Several of her children had died by the time of her husband's death, when she was left with little means of supporting her surviving children. She moved to Stirlingshire where she began writing to support herself and her family: in 1803 she published *Poems on Various Subjects*, followed by *Letters from the*

*Mountains* (1806), *Memoirs of an American Lady* (1808), *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland, with translations from the Gaelic* (1811) and *Eighteen-Thirteen: A Poem* (1814).<sup>29</sup> In this thesis I will only consider her non-fictional works, as I do not have the space for a consideration of eighteenth century poetic form.

Grant's writing became surprisingly popular. Although today much of her writing seems clichéd and overstated, patronising the Highlanders in the interests of successful marketing, in her own day it was both popular and highly regarded. There is much testament to this popularity. When she died in Edinburgh in 1838, at the age of 83, she had lived for the last 12 years of her life on a pension solicited by, among others, George the Fourth, Sir William Arbuthnot, Walter Scott, Lord Jeffrey and Henry Mackenzie. At the presentation of a memorial upon her death, Scott wrote:

Her writings, deservedly popular in her own country, derive their success from the happy manner in which, addressing themselves to the national pride of the Scottish people, they breathe a spirit at once of patriotism and of that candour which renders patriotism unselfish and liberal. We have no hesitation in attending our belief that Mrs Grant's writings have produced a strong and salutary effect upon her countrymen, who not only found recorded in them much of national history and antiquities, which would otherwise have been forgotten, but found them combined with the soundest and best lesson of virtue and morality (*Memoirs and Correspondence*, 29-30).

That Scott should write such words about her reflects the success of Grant's writing, and particularly the success of the didactic literary authority she spent much of her life constructing. In spite of what he may have felt about her writing privately, Scott here accepts her authority at face value, congratulating it for its claimed didactic motivation rather than for any kind of literariness; her writing gives the "soundest and best lessons of virtue and morality". It is also congratulated for the positive sensibility it reflects, as well as what it produces in its reader, even turning "national feeling" into something unselfish.

The majority of her contemporary reviewers also accepted this construction of her literary authority. In spite of one or two less than favourable reviews (which I will

discuss below), a review of her first book of poems in the *British Critic* in 1803 implies, like Scott, that her writing is commendable because it is based on the right kind of feeling. The reviewer accepts her experiential authority (“written from a remote and most romantic part of Scotland”) and her morally improving, sympathetic sensibility:

[Mrs Grant] speaks also with affection of the native tribes of America, as well as of her kindred Highlanders; calling them “generous nations” and asserting, that “they have always been beloved by persons any time resident among them.” ... She is evidently affectionate to her family, and warm in her private friendships; and that she and her husband are respected in their own country, which is evidenced by a long list of subscribers (291-2).

The critic notes Grant’s “local prejudices” against what she sees as “those who live more luxuriously.” In spite of these criticisms, however, the review is entirely favourable. Grant’s poetry is not congratulated for literary skill, but for sincere feeling and accurate description: her poems “are mingled with too much honesty and benevolence to give offence to any candid reader. What is much more worthy of remark, is the original picture of the Highlanders, drawn from nature, and presenting several views of nature not elsewhere to be found” (293). This review conflates Grant’s public and private personae: her domestic qualities of positive sensibility (“affectionate to her family, and warm in her private friendships”) reflect directly on her ability accurately to describe Highland culture.

## Criticism

In spite of her enormous popularity with her contemporaries, there has been little recent criticism of Grant. One of her earliest appraisals is by J.H. Millar in 1903, who claims that she is the first “female author in prose in Scotland” (539). Her letters are interesting for the personality they reveal, claims Millar, who also commends her “unusual intelligence,” her “shrewdness” and “her gift of vigorous expressions” (540). Millar’s comments should be taken with a grain of salt, however, since the quotation he chooses to demonstrate this “shrewdness” is Grant’s reactionary attack on Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*: “Nothing...can delight Misses more than to tell

them they are as wise as their masters. Though, after all, they will in every emergency be like Trinculo in the storm when he crept under Caliban's gaberdine for shelter'" (quoted in Millar: *Letters* II: 268). Grant's "unusual intelligence" for Millar seems to lie precisely in her ability to acknowledge the inferior intelligence of women!

Later commentators mostly see her predominantly for her influence on Scott, and do not address her as a writer on her own terms. Maurice Lindsay observes that Scott's *Lady of the Lake* was "perhaps influenced by his friend Anne Grant's rather stilted poem *The Highlanders* (1802)" (281); he adds that "In the category of autobiography, Anne Grant ... is remembered for her *Letters from the Mountains* (1806), keenly observed portrayals of Highland life as seen through the eyes of the daughter of the barracks-master at Fort Augustus and the wife of a military chaplain who later had a charge at Laggan" (358). Roderick Watson similarly draws attention to her ability to represent "Highland life," noting that "Scott was sensitive to trends in popular taste and he knew that Anne Grant's *Highland Memoirs* (1806) and *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808), a novel by Elizabeth Hamilton discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, had already stirred an urban interest in Highland life" (*Literature* 251). Although it is useful to place her in a wider history of Scottish literature, these commentators side-step the problem of the status of Grant's letters as text, assuming that what is good about her writing is its ability to give a faithful representation of something called "Highland life". Watson is more accurate when he does not suggest that Grant's representation is a necessarily faithful one; but none of the three commentators address her very problematic construction of literary authority out of Highland culture.

Peter Womack begins to address this influence in his study, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (1989), although by trying to fit this into his larger argument that many writers on the Highlands simultaneously helped to dehistoricize the region by constructing it as being outside of history, his reading of Grant and several other women writers is often inaccurate. Womack sees Anne Grant as

being the first, and possibly the most influential, of a group of women writers who also participated in this dehistoricization by “domesticating” the Highlands, by suggesting that the Highlanders were above and beyond the industrial world of market economy. Womack cites her critique of capitalism in her 1803 poem, *The Highlanders*, as an instance of her placement of Highland culture outside of historical process: he quotes Grant, arguing that in her poem, “the commercialised south” is unlike the Highlands in that ““grovelling interest draws each sordid plan,/And all things feel improvement’s aid but man”” (Quoted in Womack, 44). His sarcastic tone suggests that Grant exhibits a naïve moral uprightness at the same time as she is unaware of her own destructive literary project: her depiction of Highland society connotes a “high-minded indifference to the base considerations which govern the rest of us” (130). By doing so, Grant facilitates the process of Highland colonisation.

But Womack’s argument that Grant is paradoxically complicit with what she claims to be criticising is rather strained. For Womack, it is not that Grant is highlighting the fundamental incompatibility between traditional subsistence farming and the capitalist ethos of “Improvement,” but that she is foolishly depoliticizing the Highlanders as a social group, constructing them as “poetical,” not political. There is no room in Womack’s cynical stance for any political commentary here.<sup>30</sup> While with her firmly conservative beliefs she is certainly not a proto-Marxist reformer, neither is she the naïve, unthinking voice of the patriarchal bourgeois family Womack paints her to be. What Womack dismisses as “the immaterial qualities of fellow feeling” is Grant’s understanding of cultural conflict.

Womack’s determination to debunk the “Romance” associated with the Highlands leads him to dismiss Grant and a variety of other women writers with a deconstructive wave of the arm. He describes the associations with Gaelic as being a “primitive language of origin” for writers like Macpherson and Lord Monboddo, and argues that Grant and others “transpose” this male “myth of origin” onto a female “personal mode.” Moreover,

they move it into the domestic sphere, a “‘feminine’ space” in which Gaelic becomes the “native tongue of the Imaginary” while English “bears the paternal prohibition which initiates the order of the Symbolic” (134,133). But Womack’s demythologising strategy papers over some important distinctions: in fact a closer examination of the women writers he names shows that they do not serve his model particularly well. Aside from some problems with Womack’s psychoanalytic/linguistic model (How can Gaelic, a language, exist in the realm of the pre-linguistic? How can women’s more complex relation to the “Law of the Father” be simply a “personal” version of a masculine “world historical model”? Why are the personal and feminine necessarily apolitical?), there are some larger problems with his interpretation of Anne Grant and the women writers he associates with her. Womack ignores the fact that almost all women’s writing of the period was didactic, and inaccurately suggests that this “myth of education” is something specific to women writers on the Highlands. He also fails to place this didacticism in its Eighteenth century context, treating it as naïve self-righteousness rather than contextualising it in the history of women’s writing.

In addition, he fails to realise the complexities of these texts. For example his claim that Gaelic comes to occupy a “‘feminine’ space” ignores the fact that the majority of these women were gendering many aspects of Highland culture as masculine, not feminine. Much of their writing is inspired by Primitivism which, as Adam Potkay has argued, tends to be a series of masculinized values opposed to anxieties of cultural “feminisation”. Grant, for example, talks of imitating a “masculine truth of taste” based on her Highland experience, opposed to what she describes as “feminine” writing associated with urban life (*Superstitions* 271). Similarly, as I will discuss in Chapter 5, the hero of Mary Brunton’s *Discipline* is a Highland laird whose refreshing masculinity contrasts positively with the effeminate Sir Frederick, a representative of the dangerously “feminine” world of urban affectation; a similar hero is found to counteract the effeminate world of Lady Juliana in Susan Ferrier’s *Marriage*. If women create a feminine space in the Highlands, they do so in a much more complex way and, more



importantly, for different reasons than Womack suggests.

Furthermore, Womack's claim that teaching children Gaelic was unconsciously "disabling" because it contributed to the dehistoricization of the language, is just not convincing. Surely under these circumstances, the teaching of Gaelic is - in however limited a way - a political act, since knowing it would make it all the more difficult for Grant's children, inheritors of a colonial power relationship, to dismiss Highland culture. Although Grant and others are in many ways reactionary and did depict the Highlands as being in a different chronotope than English culture, it does not necessarily follow that they are necessarily depoliticizing it.

A better model than Womack's oversimplified psychoanalytic one is Ina Ferris' discussion of some contemporary women's texts, including Maria Edgeworth, Christian Isobel Johnstone and Grant herself, as "national tales". Ferris avoids what she calls Womack's "dismissive" tone, instead evolving a more productive reading of these women writers. She sees the national tale as being a minor genre of the romantic period whose goal is to "make a case to the metropolis on behalf of those in the peripheries." These tales attempt to translate aspects of a peripheral culture into textual form that can be consumed by the urban metropolis; but what is particularly interesting about some of these "national tales" is how they contain moments of resisting translation. So while they may depend upon the terms and categories of the metropolis (as Grant uses the terms "primitive" and "simple" in the passage selected by Womack), they may also point to the inability of this culture to be fully translated, or "known" by the metropolis. Ferris notes that the editor of the *Edinburgh Review* comments, in a review of *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* in 1808, "'We have a sort of malicious pleasure in announcing to our Southern Readers, that it is a sealed book to them; and that, until they take the trouble thoroughly to familiarise themselves with our antient and venerable dialect, they will not be able to understand three pages of it'" (402). According to Ferris, the "malicious pleasure" here is the knowledge that Highland culture cannot be so easily translated, that

the “Southern Reader” will have to make an effort to appreciate it. For Ferris, some of these women writers highlight that there must be a “transfer on both sides” for this “difficult border crossing” to take place.

Ferris notes that the use of Scots in books in this period was a much debated issue; many reviewers criticised it for making books unnecessarily difficult to read. She quotes John Wilson Croker’s attack on dialect in a review of Scott’s *Guy Mannering* as “barbarous and vulgar” (*Quarterly Review*, 508), and not necessary to the reader’s understanding. But this is just the point, according to Ferris: translations can point to gaps in understanding and cause an anxiety in the recognition that not all aspects of a culture can be fully translated:

This anxiety has to do with a sense of the porousness of one’s own language, a porousness exposed more directly by what we might call incomplete (or recalcitrant) translations. Linguistic permeability, allowing a leaking out as well as into, threatens the sense of the wholeness of one’s own language, and hence of the culture heavily invested in it. If such porousness is the condition of the expansion of one’s own language, it is also the sign of its vulnerability to invasion (9).

Or, in Mary Louise Pratt’s terms, where the metropolis “habitually blinds itself to the ways in which the peripheries determine [it] - beginning perhaps with the latter’s obsessive need to present and represent its peripheries and its others continuously to itself,” (*Imperial Eyes*, 6) a recalcitrant translation (either of a language, or, in the larger sense, of a culture), might temporarily uncover this “need”. I see Grant as using Highland culture to establish a didactic authority, claiming the right to criticise urban culture through her knowledge of rural. Thus while I am interested in Ferris’ discussion, my own discussion will take a somewhat different approach to Grant. Womack and Ferris provide the two most recent commentaries on Anne Grant, and on a more general level, on women writers on the Highlands. However, my approach to women writers of this period is more interested in issues of gender and authority. I will be taking a different approach from that of Womack or Ferris, neither of whom takes into account what are, I believe, these authors’ often very pressing concerns with their own authority.

## Letters

Perhaps one of the most serious difficulties for the modern reader of Grant in fact is her emphatic claims to didactic authority. Grant builds this didactic authority on a claim of experience of Highland culture, on the ability to see beyond the mediated ways of urban culture. Part of this authority comes from one of her first published works, *Memoirs of an American Lady; With Sketches of Manners and Scenes in America [as the Existed Previous to the Revoluion]* (London: 1809). Grant wrote about her experiences in eighteenth century America, an experience which she claims has given her insight and understanding into the simple, artless minds of the American natives. “Nothing could be more pleasing to a simple and benevolent mind”, she claims to her readers, than learning about the “undisguised and artless” lifestyle of the native.

This knowledge is claimed again in much of her writing. By examining some of her earlier letters (collected and published in 1807 as *Letters from the Mountains*) we can trace the development of this authority. I take Grant’s early letters, which she began writing at the age of 17, more or less at face value: that is, that they were written to an intended reader (usually a young female friend in Glasgow) in the first instance without an eye for publication. However, at the same time, Grant is clearly attempting to construct a literary persona in them, a persona which she will try to maintain in 1803 when she takes the decision to publish these letters, defending them as being completely non-fictional.<sup>31</sup>

Like other autobiographical writings, letters will always create a necessary disjunction between the real self and the literary persona produced by them. This disjunction seems to be a particularly problematic one for Grant, however, who attempts to construct her literary persona in terms of the discourse of moral sensibility and primitivism, constantly exploiting her Highland experience. Grant increasingly opposes the values of

“simplicity” in the rural environment to the luxury and dissipation of urban life in her writing. She claims to be truly “simple,” free from the “fashion” which conditions urban life. But the more Grant develops this persona in terms of a didactic simplicity, the more she places limitations on her own potential for self expression. I will examine below how she becomes trapped in her increasingly hollow fiction of “simplicity”.

Grant begins her letters in search of a narrative through which she can articulate her feelings of loneliness and isolation. Like Hanway, she tries out other literary models, comparing her experience to characters or episodes in Smollett, Swift or Sterne. These do not appear to be suitable models, however, and she soon drops her references to them. She casts around for a literary voice to use; in one early passage, for example, she describes her search for a suitable narrative to describe her experience:

What a happy faculty is an active imagination to combat the evils of sickly sensibility! I past over all the beautiful groves and cornfields that adorn the lower side, for I had seen such things before, and they brought images of happiness and tranquillity which my mind could not relish in its depressed state. But the solemn and melancholy grandeur of the lofty dark mountains, and abrupt rocks tufted with heath and juniper, that rose on the other side of the lake, and seemed to close its upper end, arrested my attention at once. I peopled their narrow and gloomy glens with those vindictive clans, that used to make such fatal incursions of old. I thought I saw Bruce and his faithful few ascending them, in his forced flight from Bute (9-10).

Grant turns to a narrative of Gothic-flavoured Highland history describing how her imaginative powers helps her turn negative feelings (a “sickly sensibility”) into a literary narrative. The language suggests the influence of Ossian (elsewhere she describes her “Ossianic mania” [12]). From even her earliest letters, Grant seems determined to exploit her Highland experience to articulate her feelings of loneliness and isolation; but as she does so, she limits her ability to express her feelings of isolation in meaningful terms.

It is not long before Grant attempts to dramatise herself in terms of Highland culture, particularly as it enables her to exploit the discourse of primitivism and moral sensibility. She implies, for example, that rural solitude and sublime scenery allow her a

freedom of feeling unknown elsewhere:

I think, if there was such a thing allowable, or what is the same thing, fashionable, a nunnery (a Protestant one, remember) might be very agreeably situated here. What would you think of such a scheme? Do not mistake me; I would not altogether intend this for a place of penance and mortification, but, rather as an asylum from the levity and dissipation of the age; where we might, uninfluenced by fashion, and undisturbed by pride and all the malignant passions that distract the giddy multitude, enjoy the tranquil pleasures of a rural retirement. There, too, we might cultivate friendships, which might rest on the basis of reason, not only through time, but through eternity (3-4).

Grant's fantasy of friendship is inscribed in didactic terms, based on the opposition between rural solitude – where “tranquil pleasures” are available – and urban “dissipation,” characterised by “malignant passions.” Her site of enunciation appears to be emotionally privileged: distanced from “fashion,” she is able to cultivate the higher pleasures. Grant adds to this, “I think I see you smile, and hear you compare me to the fox in the fable; while from this solitude I rail at the lost pleasure of the dear town” (4), as if already aware that she is turning necessity into virtue, constructing an authority out of what she has at hand, which is Highland solitude (she changes the subject immediately, however, giving no answer to the accusation she imagines being levelled at herself). In a similar vein, she writes elsewhere,

Don't think I am so new-fangled, as to begin to rail at the town, which I have just quitted, out of fondness for a country which is so new to me, and which, very probably, I may not like ... People in the country may be abundantly silly and selfish, but the passion for despicable novelties is not so constantly fed (38).

But living in a rural environment, she adds, it is possible to appreciate “one's Maker in his greatest works” (38). The only answer she seems ever able to provide against the charge that she is exploiting her experience to make herself sound virtuous, is to re-emphasise her own privileged position and the didactic authority it confers on her. Living where she does, Grant constantly reminds her reader, allows her to see beyond urban affectation.

As her letters progress, Grant seems increasingly unable to write, particularly about her

own feelings, without invoking this didactic authority. When she writes of her feelings of alienation, for example, she does so in terms of the “knowledge” she has gained from living in the Highlands, a knowledge which both sets her apart from those around her and makes her better able to appreciate her reader:

They think cunning wisdom, and mistake simplicity for folly. Very rural all this! ... Do not think that I indulge myself in the conceit of not caring for any body, unless they have the taste for reading, which great leisure and solitude, in a manner, forced upon me. But I would have people love truth and nature; I would have them look a little into the great book which their Maker has left open to everybody... O! when, or where shall I see another Harriet, uncultured and untaught, yet awake to all that is grand or beautiful in nature, all that is excellent or desirable in knowledge - whose intuitive sense of what is delicate and proper, is worth volumes of instruction! The more I know of others, the more I regret you; and the best use I ever could make of the knowledge which I have accidentally acquired, would be to impress it on the fair tablet of your spotless mind (65-6).

She turns almost every mention of her loneliness and isolation into a moral issue, using the word “simplicity” to define her own apparently uncorrupted outlook. Her simplicity, she claims, enables her to appreciate nature in a way many cannot; this sets her apart from others and intensifies her loneliness. She implies that the “knowledge” she has gained from her isolation could be shared with the reader whose special delicacy of taste Grant can appreciate. Her didactic authority also constructs her relationship with her reader, as she builds this specific reader into a similar authorial relationship she will later construct with a larger readership based on her experience of living in the Highlands.

Whenever Grant tries to articulate her loneliness, it seems to emerge in these terms: her “simplicity” rejects the world of fashion and insincerity, and she offers to share the special knowledge she has gleaned from rural solitude. But as Grant is increasingly drawn to these narrow didactic assertions, she becomes locked into a limited self-definition of “simplicity”:

I wish you saw how gay and pleasing summer looks here now; but no one will admire it with me, and delight, as I do, in feeling nature unmasked and unfettered. I feel my mind rife to a kind of melancholy greatness, when I contemplate these scenes, particularly by moonlight; but I think I should rejoice *once more* if I met with one that tasted all this as I do. I am seized with longings for you all that are



very painful; nobody will care for me here, because nobody will understand me. I cannot blame them. I am too rustic, too simple at least, for people of the world, with whom manner is everything; and though myself uneducated, I painfully feel I have too much refinement, too much delicacy for uninformed people, with whom I feel no point of union but simplicity (171-2).

Grant begins with the discourse of landscape aesthetics, but this rapidly turns into a rhetoric of feeling from which she attempts to articulate her loneliness. She sees nature as others cannot, “unmasked and unfettered,” but it is a vision which she is unable to share with others. Her tone turns didactic as she insists that the cause of this loneliness is a matter of both simplicity and refinement. She is too “simple” for fashionable people while “simplicity” is not enough to make her feel close to those without her refinement of sensibility.

Grant continues to use this rhetoric of feeling to draw the reader further into a teacher/pupil relationship. Whenever she writes of her isolation, it is in terms of her desire to educate and improve her reader:

I would carry you with me wherever I go; I would teach you to think, that you might supply the defect of timely tuition, by giving, yourself, some culture to that excellent understanding. Your mind is too good a soil to run to waste. When I think of your native taste, your delicacy of feeling, and that rectitude of judgement which is your peculiar excellence, I grieve that you know so few who comprehend what you possess, or know what you are capable of acquiring. How pleasing to see the beauties of such a mind expanding! (Will that pleasure ever again be mind?) Let me suppose it, in the mean time, a mirror, in which the images that pass through mine will be reflected (117).

She claims to be one of the few who can appreciate the reader’s delicacy of taste and feeling. The “pleasure” Grant claims she would receive from helping the reader’s mind to “expand” is a moral pleasure, associated with observing the growth of natural virtue. But this relationship is likened to one involving a metaphorical “mirror.”

There are vague warnings in some of Grant’s letters where she implies that her reader may be succumbing to urban corruption: a close reading suggests that it may be because her readers are growing tired of Grant’s didactic authority. Several years later, in 1775,

she continues to maintain her firm identity of “simplicity” to her earlier friends in the letters above, even in the face of what appears to be a failing correspondence:

Yours came just in time to relieve my anxiety, and prevent me from absolutely despairing of ever hearing more from you. Need I tell you my uneasiness, or how I rejoiced on receiving another proof of your continued love?  
... Pray explain yourself about being sick of elegance. I don't remember teasing you about the world; but my out of the world education, and primitive notions, and almost savage simplicity of taste, made yours seem to be to border on false refinement. I triumph in your confession, having always assured myself that your native sensibility and ripened judgment would lead you back to the paths of nature and truth. - Then you will fully relish that chaste and sublime simplicity in stile, in manners, and in sentiment, which delights the untutored mind (181, 188)

Grant turns what may have been a complaint on her own repetitive moralising (“teasing” the reader about the false “elegance” of urban life) into evidence of her own simplicity. The reader seems - to Grant, at any rate - to have “confessed” that Grant was correct. Grant seems unable to let the relationship with her reader slip out of a didactic grip; even her perhaps slightly apologetic tone goes back to a reaffirmation of her “almost savage simplicity of taste.” Simplicity has a strongly moral overtone (here the word “chaste” suggests a sense of female decency), suggesting a quality which Grant feels the reader is in danger of losing. Grant echoes Blair's notion of the sublime consisting of “simplicity and conciseness,” a rejection of all false ornamentation, associated with a heightened moral pleasure.

Grant seems to be in constant fear of losing this authority over her reader. She describes the benefits of friendship in another letter several years later in terms of its benefits to the reader, although what seems to be her anxiety over the failing correspondence has an almost pathetic ring to it:

My dearest girl! I most sincerely forgive your perplexing and mortifying silence, and most willingly attribute the chasm in our correspondence to any other motive than indifference, altogether inconsistent as it is with the sincerity and affection which for so great and distinguishing a part of your character. But now, that my forgiveness may be as sincere as I know your penitence to be, let me, with my accustomed freedom, warn you of the consequences of indulging in that unfriendly indolence, less pardonable in your active, lively disposition, than in my easy and indolent one. ... In the present unsettled habits of your life, there is nothing you

ought to be so careful of as cherishing those friendships which have given you so much pleasure, and done you so much good in your earlier years (196-7).

Grant's friendship is a source of the right kind of "pleasure," based as it is on benevolent affections. But is there a dark warning here that Grant may change her opinion of the reader if her authority begins to dissolve? The reader's "sincerity and affection" is only a "part" of her character, and Grant warns that she must not become self-indulgent. There is a faint implication that if the reader cannot appreciate Grant's friendship, it will reflect badly on the reader's own potentially "indulgent" sensibility.

By the time she took the decision to publish her letters in 1806, Grant was locked into a literary persona modelled on this didactic "simplicity." She feels she must address the issue of why – although a woman concerned with her private respectability – she is publishing her private correspondence. In a series of Prefaces to the published version of her *Letters*, she insists on the "simplicity" of her writing, in particular asserting their non-fictional literary status. But what seems to be a preoccupation with the issue of fiction is, I believe, more accurately a preoccupation with the problematic nature of her claim to "simplicity". Simplicity has come to suggest emotional honesty, an unornamented style, and a lack of self-conscious "artifice". But Grant is arguably guilty of all three, at least according to her own associations with the word "simple." If her letters are read as fiction, then the literary persona with which she has come to identify herself will be not just fictional, but potentially hypocritical – a use of literary ornament to claim the inability to use literary ornament. Her Prefaces try to negotiate around these problems, in an increasingly aggressive attempt to assert her letters' non-fictional status.

Her Dedication and Advertisements to the First and Second Editions assert that her letters are non-fictional as she attempts to distinguish her letters from the many other contemporary collections of fictional letters. The second edition of her letters opens with a "Dedication" to her correspondents, thanking them for allowing her to print their names alongside her letters. Printing these names, asserts Grant, is proof that her letters

are non-fictional:

To you I inscribe these Letters, which you have kindly permitted me to illuminate with names, which accredit the writer, and totally destroy the unjust surmise, - that you are all "like some gay creatures of the element, the creation of exuberant fancy".

But whether or not these names "prove" the non-fictional status of her letters is in many ways irrelevant (at any rate, they are not the appeal to an external authority they claim to be, as there is no proof that the names themselves are not fictional). The distinction that Grant is really trying to assert is not so much between fiction and non-fiction, as it is between a kind of writing which is based on emotional sincerity and one which is not. The inclusion of names is not the evidence she claims it is, and she turns instead to evidence of feeling. She shifts responsibility onto the reader to sense the sincerity of her feeling: "To those who could suppose me capable of such an imposition," she continues, "I only wish that, by being connected by ties as tender, with minds as estimable, they may be convinced of the possibility of your existence". The implication is that the sceptical reader probably lacks the right kind of "tender" connection, in which case, such a reader has not the qualifications to judge questions of sensibility in the first place.

It is similarly up to the reader to discern evidence of this emotional authenticity in the letters themselves. In the Advertisement to the First Edition, the ostentatious modesty of the tone is part of an attempt to efface the tautological nature of her assertion of the letters' "originality":

The simple and careless Letters here offered to the public, carry in themselves the evidences of originality. They are genuine, but broken and interrupted sketches of a life spent in the most remote obscurity. Of the little interest such sketches might possess, much is lost by the necessity of withholding those parts which contained most of narrative and anecdote.

Claiming that her letters are "simple and careless" suggests the values Grant is desperately trying to have attributed both to herself and to her writing. But her logic is circular. Proof of the letters' non-fictional status, she asserts, is self-evident: they "carry in themselves the evidences of originality". Fictional writing, like fashionable

insincerity, is what happens elsewhere; from her “remote obscurity,” only “broken and interrupted sketches” can be produced. Their non-fictional status is also reflected in the “withholding ... of narrative and anecdote”. But as with the dedication, a claim to be non-fictional cannot be proven by an appeal to internal logic, since the claim itself could just as easily be part of the fiction. If Grant’s letters are seen as fictional, then her claim to simplicity will be not just false, but hypocritical.

Which brings her to the real problem: publishing private letters is hardly a sign of “simplicity,” but could be perceived as a kind of literary ostentation. She raises this question herself: “Why letters should be published at all, comprehending so little to excite interest or gratify curiosity, is a question that naturally suggests itself,” she points out in her Advertisement to the First Edition. The passive language she uses seems to disown authorship, although the problem of authority seems stubbornly to haunt her:

Yet may not a picture, seldom drawn, peculiar in its shades and scenery, true to nature, and chastely coloured; may not such a picture amuse, for a while, the leisure of the idle and contemplative? -- and it is hoped, that the images here offered of untutored sentiment, of the tastes, the feelings, and habits of those, who, in the secret shades of privacy, cultivate the simple duties and kindly affections of domestic life, may not be without utility.

The soul that rises above its condition and feels undefined and painful aspirations after unattainable elegance and refinement, may here find an inducement to remain in safe obscurity, contented with the love of truth, of nature, and the “Humanising Muse” while those distinguished beings, who are the favourites, of nature and of fortune, may learn to look with complacency on their fellow minds, in the vale of life, and to know that they too have their enjoyments.

Grant asserts her “private sphere” values: the only reason for publishing is to spread these values to the urban sphere, potentially giving those who are “induced” to seek a life of impossible luxury to appreciate the pleasure of domesticity. She aligns herself with the argument put forward by many Eighteenth century moral philosophers that writing can be a morally improving act, educating the sentiments and increasing sociability. The “enjoyments” she offers, then, are hopefully of some “utility,” giving insights into “untutored sentiment” and “kindly affections” of a “simple” lifestyle.

Grant's own question about the justification for publishing private correspondence is thrown back at her by one of her reviewers. The *Critical Review* of 1806 calls her writing "high-flown" and, referring to her self-professed "Ossianic mania," "possessed with all the madness of that strange rhapsody, without its inspiration," adds that she is "unable or unwilling to solve" her own question:

The same question then will naturally occur to the reader, which has suggested itself to the authoress herself in her preface, viz. "Why letters should be published at all, comprehending so little to excite interest, or to gratify curiosity itself." But how shall we answer this question? a question which she herself has been unable or unwilling to solve, otherwise than by insinuating that its publication has been elicited by a *painful* circumstance. If she alludes to pecuniary distress, we fear it will not be alleviated by the profits of the present publication (222).

The *Critical Review* is unimpressed by Grant's claim to didactic authority; even her claim to emotional authenticity is denied as the reviewer notes her lack of "inspiration". Instead, her *Letters* are addressed in literary terms and found wanting. To deny Grant her claim to a didactic sensibility is to bring her face to face with the insubstantial nature of an authority, which, without the reader's collusion, is meaningless. It is unsurprising that she charges the critic with unkind sentiments in a letter (later published) to her editor, John Hatsell, "The Critical Review, in particular, speaks of the Letters with unqualified scorn, and concludes with a sneer of the most illiberal nature, unwarranted even by the imputed demerits of the book" (*Memoirs*, 113).

Since the first edition of her letters was published anonymously, the problem of proving their non-fictionality seems an odd one to find so preoccupying. But as I have argued, the real problem is her literary authority, which had become an essential component of the identity of the real Grant. But "simplicity" suggests being artless and unself-conscious, and Grant is clearly painfully conscious of herself, particularly her literary persona. Her letters are very concerned with constructing a persona who appears simple and artless, but who is not (asserting artlessness requires a knowledge of what artfulness is, and a desire to appear a certain way to the reader). The more she asserts her simplicity, the more it becomes, by its own definition, contradictory. Thus I believe that



tied up with the issue of her letters' fictionality is the desire to quell her own self-doubt, to insist that the real Grant co-incides with the fictional one, a co-incidence which at some level she may feel is untrue. This explains her increasingly aggressive tone in an Advertisement to the Second Edition, where she alternates between referring to herself in the first and in the second person:

Her only hope, of even partial attention, was founded upon that love of truth, which, for the best moral purposes, is implanted in the human heart; that generous instinct, which lives in the unsophisticated mind, and which feels and acknowledges the language of nature and native feeling, wherever it is heard. Reality, in short, was the prop on which I leant; and it has not deceived me. Minds right in every intellectual endowment, whose talents give brilliancy to their virtues, and whose virtues give solidity, value, and effect to their talents; minds, to which even the worthy and the wise have been accustomed to look up for light, have shed the lustre of their approbation on the simple sketches of narrative and description, the artless effusions of the heart and imagination, which constitute the whole interest of the following selection. It is for such minds as these to distinguish the durable pencil of truth from the water-colours of fiction; and it is not for their satisfaction, but to carry conviction home to a different and inferior class of readers, that the undeniable proofs of a genuine correspondence are about to appear in a second edition. This edition [is] drawn forth by the generous encouragement of those whom the public voice has ranked among the worthy and the wise, ... With what delight, were it permitted me, or could my voice confer distinction, should I enumerate my patrons; but more especially my patronesses (ix-xi).

The "inferior" reader who would believe that her letters are fiction seems not even to have the right to do so, as the decision has already been made by external authorities, "minds" upon which Grant cannot lavish enough compliments (again, however, these "minds" are unnamed so cannot really provide any significant confirmations of her claims). She also insists that proof of the letters' non-fictional status is provided in the sentiment they contain: a reader who knows the "language of nature and native feeling" will be able to appreciate these sentiments.

I will close this chapter with a brief examination of how Grant continues to exploit this rhetoric of simplicity throughout her career as a writer both in her personal and her public personae, in spite of some of the obvious problems it poses. Grant continued to have problems with the concept of simplicity. An unpublished and undated letter in the

National Library of Scotland reflects her difficult position<sup>32</sup>: this letter is written in response to an interest expressed in her situation by an undisclosed number of her subscribers.<sup>33</sup> In the letter she indirectly asks for money; but before she begins her account of her difficult financial circumstances, she claims that she will write “with the utmost simplicity and candour.” “Simplicity” here, as in her claim to be publishing only “simple sketches” in her *Letters*, suggests innocence, artlessness and modesty. In fact, however, Grant is not being “artless”: having so many children on a limited income required her to seek means of supporting them. But at the same time, she is uncomfortable with asking for help. Under the circumstances, being “simple” is not possible; she is, as she describes herself, “Too proud to solicit aid; but too humble to refuse it from a channel so respectable as that you mention.” Simplicity, as I will argue in the next chapter, comes increasingly to embody virtues which Grant fears she is jeopardising by being what she will call an “incongruous ... female writer.”<sup>34</sup>

Grant increasingly bases her literary authority on an experiential understanding of Highland culture, one which cannot be emulated by others, and one which she claims is distanced from the mediated ways of urban culture. From this understanding, she claims to know the true meaning of “simplicity,” both in feeling and in the kind of artistic expression which emerges from it. However, Grant becomes trapped in her own didacticism, defining this authority increasingly by its difference from other, more mediated forms of writing. In my next chapter, I will discuss Grant’s *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland* in terms of the limitations this didactic authority poses on her writing.

### Chapter 3: Anne grant's *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland*

Anne Grant continues to write until the end of her life, developing her didactic authority in terms of her experience in the Highlands. Following the success of her poetry and *Letters*, she publishes her *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland* in 1811. These titles both reflect this didactic authority, the former in particular suggesting an ethnographic approach such as that of Thomas Blackwell or Hugh Blair.<sup>35</sup>

But of course Grant is hardly equipped to produce any kind of critical analysis of Highland culture. Instead of the scholarly discussion implied by the title, I will argue that the *Essays* can be more accurately read at least partially as an extended attempt to resolve some of the same literary anxieties she expresses in her *Letters*. But in the *Essays*, these anxieties are articulated in different terms. In her *Letters* she increasingly limits herself to a didactic authority associated with values of “simplicity”; the more she comes to identify herself with this authority, the more she becomes deeply disturbed at the idea that her writing can be seen as fiction. In her *Essays*, however, she uses the Highlanders to explore the relationship between imagination and morality, a relationship which she finds difficult to resolve in terms of her own writing. She suggests that the Highlanders are moral beings marked by their “simplicity” who occasionally succumb to their imaginations, prone as they are to ancient superstitions. It is interesting to consider how Grant’s depiction of the Highlanders has some interesting resonances with her own situation. Although she describes it as a “happy faculty” in her early letters, by the time her *Essays* are published in 1813 Grant has come to distrust the “imagination.” If it is not carefully regulated, she warns, it can pose serious dangers, leading away from the safe path of representational writing.<sup>36</sup>

I will begin my discussion by examining a series of letters published at the end of the second volume of the *Essays* (it is useful to remember that the full title of this text is

*Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland to Which are Added Translations from the Gaelic and Letters Connected with those Formerly Published*).

There is no explanation given for the inclusion of these letters with the rest of her text, except that they contain some of Grant's impressions of Highland culture. I believe, however, that they are included to confirm Grant's didactic authority. Unlike her *Letters from the Mountains*, however, these letters are written after she had begun to publish and are therefore characterised by a self-conscious desire to construct a public persona (there is some evidence for this: the addressee tends to be unspecific, the letters are not dated, and she makes many broad claims about the relationship between writing and female respectability).

## Ossian

One of these letters shows how Grant comes to construct the narrative of her life in terms of this didactic authority. In 1803, Grant describes how she was originally influenced by Ossian, but how she ultimately came to find a more authentic appreciation of the Highlands. She recalls how her reading of Ossian's poetry initially conditioned her reception of the Highlands:

When I came ... to Scotland, Ossian obtained a complete ascendant over my imagination, to a much greater degree than ever he has done since. Thus determined to like the Highlands: a most unexpected occurrence carried me, in my seventeenth year, to reside there ... yet it is not easy to say how much I was repelled and disappointed. In vain I tried to raise my mind to the tone of sublimity. The rocky divisions that rose with so much majesty in description, seemed like enormous prison walls ... These feelings, however, I did not even whisper to the rushes, but in the mean while was busied in all the little arts of self-deception. I tried to think that a dark morass looked cheerful when the summer sun shone on it, but I soon found that [flowers] were the charms that engaged my fancy (336).

Grant is not alone in being influenced by Ossian. The many discourses which take the Highlands as their object – the sublime, the picturesque, primitivism, Ossianism – conditions the way many travellers and newcomers saw, or tried to see, the Highlands. As I argued in my first chapter, Johnson tries to disentangle himself from these discourses, and forty years later Coleridge finds that words like “sublime” and

“majestic” are so popular as to be almost meaningless. Here, Grant tries to distance herself from the kind of discourse which leads to a false appreciation of Highland culture by suggesting that although it influenced her when she was seventeen, she has since come to value the real Highlands.

Her letter gives much detail of her changing feelings towards the Highlands. Grant goes on to recall an early dislike of Highland culture generally. She writes that after a trip South, she returned to find that, “I discovered, that, however my fancy might be delighted with particular spots, the general aspect of things within the girdle of the Grampians was not congenial to me” (337). She recalls resigning herself to a life among “wild mountaineers, whose language I did not understand, and to whose character ... I was a stranger” (337). She also recalls suffering from intellectual stultification in this isolation: “now my activity of mind, and love of knowledge, were confined to very narrow limits indeed” (337, 337-8). But this taught her to look with fresh eyes on the culture that lay before her, finding previously hidden intellectual and spiritual directions in a complex understanding of the Highlanders. In spite of these “narrow limits,” her mind, like “water whose channel is impeded ... took a different course,” focusing itself into what she depicts as a new ethnographic interest. In this way, she describes herself as having evolved a new understanding of the Highlanders which was based on the reality of her lived experience, unlike her previously textually mediated experience:

Whatever appeared to me a subject of laudable curiosity, I seized and appropriated. New objects perfectly compatible with my new duties appeared, and I pursued these with proportionate eagerness. The language, the customs, the peculiar tone of sentiment, and manners of the people, - the maxims, traditions, music, and poetry of the country I made my own with all possible expedition (338).

Grant’s tone of ethnographic objectivity is undermined by her language of possession: words like “seized,” “appropriated” and “made my own” reveal an underlying agenda of taking over Highland culture for purposes other than promoting and preserving it. She is replacing Ossian’s influence with a new kind of authority, based on the discourse of primitivism and moral sensibility.

But in spite of her claims to have left the influence of Ossian behind in favour of an understanding of the *real* Highlands, her rhetoric echoes Blair:

What a scene did this open to me! what an interest did it create, in a country walled in from the world; where the language, customs, and traditions have remained so many ages unimproved and undepraved, the native region of heroic, musical, and poetical enthusiasm! (338-9)

Although she begins this description in terms of what sounds like an ethnographic “interest” (“language, customs, and traditions”), her rhetoric is based on primitivism, a discourse itself fuelled by Ossianism: expressions such as “walled in from the world,” “so many ages unimproved and undepraved,” “a place of “heroic, musical, and poetical enthusiasm!” constructs the Highlanders as a source of remedial wisdom and Grant as the agent of cultural translation. But what appears to be an authority of ethnographic knowledge is really little more than an echoing of pre-existing discourse with a careful foregrounding of its didactic value. She even likens her new understanding of the Highlanders to a kind of prophetic knowledge, an extreme interpretation of Johnson’s notion of ethnography as providing knowledge of a “divine order”: she recalls how her knowledge of the Highlanders made her feel “like a gifted seer, from whose eyes the unseen powers had suddenly removed the veil of separation” (339).

Grant suggests that she learned to see distinct of any cultural or literary fashion. She uses her claims to a “special knowledge” to distinguish herself from a more formal, mediated kind of art in the same letter. She recalls a second trip to “the south” and the new eyes with which she saw it: the people were devoid of “sentiment” and “I saw nothing around me but tame, flat nature, and formal, frigid art” (339). Unlike her own art which she implies is unmediated by any kind of “separation” between form and content, this kind of “art” lacks energy and vitality. “Formal” suggests an emphasis on style at the expense of content, a dependency on “embellishment” and “ornamentation,” what she claims to have banished from her own writing. Likewise, “frigid” suggests a lack of enthusiasm, the creative energy Grant claims to have learned from the Highlanders. Her rhetoric



reflects the growing association between nature and art, as if rural retirement will produce a kind of “art” somehow outside the mediated literary forms which characterise the poetry of the urban sphere.

She links her own more emotive reaction to a wild nature, claiming that upon her return to the Highlands, her emotions were as if set free: “O how did I lift up my joyful voice, when I drew near the mountains of Perthshire, and at the pass of Killiecrankie! ... -How populous, how vital is the *Strath*! And with what a mixture of emotions did I behold it!” (340-1). The sprinkling of exclamation marks and references to stimulated emotions here suggests an impatience with formality. Coming from what is claimed to be an intense “mixture of emotions,” this passage seems to reflect an identification with the Highlands at the level of sensibility as she describes “ardent ... devotion” which “enlarged my capacity for being delighted” (340, 1). Her writing appears to be based on pure feeling (she recalls “lift[ing] her joyful voice,” as if it were a particularly unmediated kind of artistic expression), and her energetic language seems to provide further “proof” of its basis in intensely felt experience.

In these letters, Grant spends much time distinguishing her work from other kinds of female writing which she insists are immodest and inappropriate. She makes a series of comments about her *Poems* of 1803, insisting that unlike the writing of other women, her poems are “simple” and unmediated by artificial ornamentation. She describes her poetry in an ostentatiously modest tone, as if to imply that she is incapable of literary affectation:

Now I very well know, that both the poems and the flowers owed their power of pleasing chiefly to their locality, and would comparatively be very little thought of in any other place. The value they (the poems) have, lies merely in the simplicity of the thought, and the ease of the versification. They are, too, like portraits, whose chief merit is in exact resemblance, but which have not even that merit, to those who have never seen the originals (269).

The real pleasure of her poetry, she implies, is in its accurate reflection of its setting, not

in her agency as a writer. She emphasises “locality,” “simplicity,” “ease of versification” and “exact resemblance,” qualities which reflect her faithfulness to the original rather than her creative input. In fact, this passage suggests that the real “value” of the poems lies precisely in their refusal to be creative: the “pleasure” is in the careful evocation of the original “locality.” But if Grant seems to be a passive agent in her poetry, she claims to be an active agent in self-censorship: “here I have *acted* conscientiously: that is, consulted my own simple taste, and been much more attentive to truth of delineation than to the beauty and glow of colouring, which is so often substituted for it” (270). She claims to have refused to replace the pleasure of careful description with a more seductive, sensual pleasure. Her “simple tastes” here suggest an ability to write with honesty and sincerity, avoiding other kinds of ornamentation. The same distinction between carefully delineated truth and literary embellishment is drawn in a variety of other letters contained at the end of her *Essays*. For example, in another letter (briefly mentioned in my Introduction) apparently addressed to a young girl, Grant compares two different kinds of writing, the “fashionable” kind or the “laborious” kind embodied by Samuel Richardson, to two kinds of painting. If a picture could be painted of a scene of fond remembrance to the girl, asks Grant, which would the girl prefer: a “pleasing” landscape of “green valley and serpentine windings of the river below,” or a “laborious” Dutch painting of a “cottage ... in which all its appendages should be faithfully delineated”? The latter would be preferable, as it would be of more interest and would better exercise the positive emotions of sympathy. The people who prefer “fashionable” writing, adds Grant, “are like rich people’s children, who know no pleasure but getting new toys” (314-7). Grant suggests that her writing is characterised by accurate description and careful self-censorship and, like Kames’s notion of tragedy, functions by exercising the sympathetic passions instead of providing easy pleasure.

This claim to be providing “truth of delineation” is also part of Grant’s attempt to construct her female respectability. It is odd, she observes, “how close taste in poetry follows taste in dress” (346). She links female writing with female sexuality, asserting

that she has “drawn nature and manners as I see them around me, with correct chastity and scrupulous fidelity” (270), compared to writers who are “cheap” and “attainable” in their use of “flimsy and tinsel ornament” (270). By contrast, her Muse wears “no ornament but the blue snood and silver brooch of her country: - no attire but the simple folds of customary tartan” (270-1). The pleasure produced by immodest clothing is here likened to the kind of sensual pleasure produced by “ornamented” writing. Women who do not adhere to the same kind of “simple” truth as she does are willingly offering these easy, sensual pleasures, and such women forfeit all claim to respectability. Grant makes the connection between loose sexuality and literariness more explicit a few pages later: “Who that admires Mrs P. or Miss S. will ever tolerate me?” (297) she asks. She asks her correspondent about his opinion of “female writers of poetry” and follows it with her own judgmental commentary:

the only female writers of poetry I can recollect at present, who have kept their garments unspotted, are Carter, Barbauld, and Williams. All the rest have sat much too long at their toilette, and are so bedizzened, - they nod such spangled plumes, and trail such pompous trains, - that, like every other artificial and superficial thing, they are only calculated for the fashion of the day, - to please and dazzle for a moment (298).

Unlike her “simple pleasures,” other women writers offer pleasure of a more sensual kind. Recalling Jane Spencer’s description of the stereotype of women writers as “dirty,” Grant similarly suggests that they have failed to keep “their garments unspotted” (*Rise*, 5).<sup>37</sup> Her metaphor implies that a lack of literary modesty is akin to a lack of sexual modesty, that drawing attention to literary style instead of “truth of delineation” is like employing sexual “dazzle” to attract observers. Grant recalls the distinction made by David Hume between “simplicity” and “refinement” in terms of female chastity: “it is with books as with women, where a certain plainness of manners and of dress is more engaging than that glare of paint and airs and apparel, which may dazzle the eye, but reaches not the affections” (195). Simplicity, for Hume as for Grant, is a safer kind of pleasure which does not lead the reader into corruption.

In fact, Grant attempts to distance herself from women's writing and to align herself with "that severe and masculine truth of taste which rejects superfluous decoration, and adopts the great outline" (271). "Misses" will not be interested in her work, she asserts, but their "grandsons" will continue to read it, "not as a fine poem, but as a correct drawing" (272). She associates women's writing with softness, decoration and exaggeration and men's with strong lines, "severe" truth and verisimilitude.

She continues to insist on simplicity, claiming even to despise for example the "affected simplicity of language" which distinguishes some writers [346]). This simplicity suggests a rejection of any kind of imaginative colouring. As well as an opposition between male and female writing, then, Grant also invokes an opposition between "truth of delineation" and the luxury of imaginative excess:

I know I should have pleased much more, had I permitted my imagination to wander among the very beautiful glens and glades that here and there derive a nameless enchantment from the sublime nakedness that surrounds them. Here I could have willingly luxuriated, and "paused on every charm," in happier days of unchecked enjoyment (271).

By avoiding imaginative excess, she avoids the easy pleasure of "Arcadian images," providing instead the greater pleasure of "verisimilitude" (271). In fact, she suggests that it requires constant supervision to avoid being lost in this kind of imaginative excess:

I *must* have pleasures, and they *must* be pure. At the same time, I walk with the fear of common sense before my eyes; and therefore dare not join my brethren and sisters, the children of fancy, in their excursions to fairy-land; having sagaciously discovered that enchanted region to be like the lion's den, - many tracks of beasts going in, but none of any returning (276).

Grant's metaphor is dressed in didactic rhetoric, but at the same time it suggests what may be a real fear of "fancy." She begins by asserting that it is "pure ... pleasures" which stimulate her desire to regulate her imagination, but she goes on to liken the imagination to a dangerous path that leads to the "lion's den" out of which there is no escape. There is a possible double meaning in the word "fear," suggesting not just "respect" for "common sense" but a real discomfort with losing track of reality, or

perhaps of the boundaries between herself and writing which is not “simple.”

Grant opposes the dissipation of urban culture to the more simple lifestyle of the rural environment as a metaphor for the kind of writing she is producing. But within this rhetoric are images which suggest the “fear” of losing track of common sense is a very real one which may even haunt her own writing:

The highway, again, is too crowded for me. People who think of nothing but running straight forward would jostle me into the ditch, while I was dreaming of elysium. I had therefore a little quiet footpath of my own, which I took pleasure in decorating with simple flowers, cherished by my own hands. Into that I allured others, who equally hated sloth and bustle; and there we cultivated friendship, and gathered its fruits. Nothing was distorted, nothing was exaggerated; yet every thing was brightened and enlivened (277).

Grant articulates this opposition in terms of the luxury (“sloth”) of urban writers and the quiet “pleasure” of her own rural environment. She claims to be avoiding the excessive ornamentation of urban writers, those cannot appreciate her “simple flowers”. Grant’s constant patrolling of the boundaries of her text in this way suggests her anxieties about her own literary authority. But there are problems with her claim to be a simple writer who does not use ornament, particularly since the only way she can assert this is by using a different kind of literary ornament – metaphorical terms such as “simple flowers”. She criticises other writers for their “affected simplicity,” but arguably does not live up to her own description of being a truly “simple” writer.

There are even moments when Grant appears to consider this contradictory position. The more she constructs strict boundaries between “artificial” and “simple” writing, the more she finds herself inadvertently violating them; the more she insists that she despises “women writers,” the more she is haunted by the possibility of being one herself.

Towards the end of her letters, Grant briefly probes this paradox:

That elasticity of mind, upon which my friends compliment me, always rises most under distress and difficulty. When my mind is depressed by sorrow, it often assumes a high tone of enthusiasm: I retire within myself: The world vanishes from before me; and, under these circumstances, composition of the most solemn and

serious kind is a task not merely easy, but soothing and consolatory. But when I come down from this abstraction, to eating cares and endless interruptions, - ruffled and teased, - no longer mistress of myself, - I regard the productions of my fancy with disgust and indifference, and could hardly endure to look them over. Certainly a female writer is an incongruous thing! (290-1).

As she feels the weight of these paradoxes, Grant still presents them as another kind of opposition, between her normal state and an “enthusiastic” one. She admits that there are periods during which her “composition” may be less than “simple”: she turns inward, perhaps suggesting that the connection between the “world” and a “truthfully delineated” representation of it is temporarily lost. And what emerges from this “enthusiastic” state is not “simple sketches” but “productions of ... fancy” which fill her with disgust. This passage suggests a loss of control, an inability to regulate her own creative impulses in the way she claims she does elsewhere.

But she also admits that there is something positive about these periods of release: this kind of composition is “soothing and consolatory,” perhaps a necessary form of self-expression she elsewhere denies herself. Although it is impossible to know what she really means by this “enthusiastic” state, it may refer to a temporary and welcome escape from her own strict boundaries of “simple” writing. It seems to be only during these periods that she is “mistress of myself,” instead of being “ruffled and teased,” suggesting that on occasion indulging in some imaginative excess allows her a form of self-possession that she cannot find when she is trying to live up to “simplicity.” Moreover, she seems to be in two minds about the kind of composition she produces in this state: while it is a “production of fancy” it is also “solemn and serious.” In Grant’s usage, “fancy” is almost synonymous with imaginative excess and the easy pleasure of literary embellishment, while the word “solemn” suggests a kind of spiritual dignity and “serious” similarly suggests earnestness and sincerity. She suggests here that this “enthusiastic” writing is of a moral nature at the same time as she distances herself from it because of its associations with imaginative excess.



She also distances herself from this kind of composition by marking off its periodic nature: it is something only done during episodes of “depression” and partially against her own will. But when she “comes down” from this abstraction she returns to her dislike of imaginative writing (especially by women). She is left treading a shaky line between honesty and self-deception, as if she realises at some level that she has defined writing as something which disgusts her but which nevertheless she cannot help but do. Or, as she points out in a rare moment of indirectly referring to herself as a “female writer,” she is something “incongruous,” a category which by definition she cannot be if she wants to retain the respectability upon which much of her literary authority rests. At the same time, however, she also implies that this writing - in spite of what she says elsewhere about imaginative excess - is not necessarily of an immoral nature.

## Essays

Grant is even more preoccupied by the problems of the imagination when she comes to write the “essays” after which the title *Essays* is taken. Here she tries to balance creativity, morality and simplicity, still maintaining a didactic distinction between the pleasures of urban luxury and those of rural innocence. She uses the Highlanders to suggest that some kinds of fictions are products of what she feels to be imaginative excess, created by people who are otherwise characterised by their “simplicity” and emotional sincerity. Using the Highlanders allows her to find another category of writing with which she never overtly aligns herself or defines explicitly, but which is nevertheless an attempt to resolve some of her anxieties about writing and authorship.

Grant invokes the same kind of rhetoric used by Samuel Johnson in her defence of why it is useful to write about the Highlands. Johnson suggests in *Idler* 97 that writing about other cultures should give a sense of “in what proportion Providence has distributed the blessings of nature and the advantages of art, among the several nations of the Earth” (298). But although Grant borrows this rhetoric, she implies that the real use of her

writing about the Highlanders is its ability to produce feeling of a moral nature:

One of the most pleasing speculations in which the unhardened and unsophisticated mind can indulge, is that of tracing the bountiful and wise disposition of things, by which, in every state where intelligence is excited, and moral order in any measure preserved, there is a degree of happiness, at least enjoyment, commensurate to the portion of knowledge acquired, or of mild affections cultivated (2: 65-6).

Grant mentions the “intelligence ... excited” by her “speculations,” but retreats from this kind of intellectual authority into one of a more affective nature. More important than intelligence is the positive sensibility produced: the “degree of happiness” or “at least enjoyment” or “mild affections” produced when “moral order” is maintained. As in her *Letters*, it is also implied that the reader who cannot feel this pleasure is emotionally deficient, perhaps “hardened.” Grant’s authoritative tone is deceptive, and her claim to authority is an insubstantial one. She implies that her writing is at once morally improving and socially beneficial, but in an unquantifiable way, since clearly there is no way to measure a “degree of happiness.”

She maintains the ethical benefits of her writing at every opportunity. It is all about producing moral feeling for a moral reader:

There are ... lovers of nature and of truth, who find gratification in tracing the progress and effects of opinion, upon minds which have neither been improved nor sophisticated. ... I shall think, with some satisfaction, on the accidents of life, which have opened to my view this “invisible world” of the imagination, if it enables me to gratify a curiosity so useful and so rational, or even to afford a transient degree of amusement to a class of readers, with feelings congenial to my own (1:161-2).

This authority is again an elusive one, as Grant implies that her justification for writing is to be measured in terms of the moral feeling produced in the reader. This passage does not just insist on the morality of her writing, however; it also distances her from the imagination (she has objectively “viewed” the “invisible world” of the imagination”) and reclaims the imagination in terms of its use-value (describing it will feed a similarly objective curiosity “so useful and so rational”). Her description of the Highlanders’ imagination suggests that it is of a different order from that of the “children of fancy,”

described in her letters above; here, the appeal is to a “class of readers” who love “nature and ... truth.”

Satisfying this curiosity is both safe and natural and bound to produce the right kind of pleasure. But her metaphor again points to a kind of mental “wandering” which she claimed to avoid in her letters, above:

The comparison between an uncivilized and highly illuminated people, must certainly be very much in favour of the latter. We should cultivate the garden to very little purpose, if its productions were not more beautiful and more abundant than those of the wilderness. Yet the natural taste that leads us to wander and to speculate with a kind of nameless pleasure among the wildest recesses of the forest or fell, does not abate, but exalt our delight in the fertility and beauty of cultivated scenes: On the contrary, the pleasure is heightened by contrast (1: 1-3).

Although progress is superior, there is nevertheless a pleasure involved in learning about an “uncivilized” people. She argues that this “nameless pleasure” is a healthy, productive one because Highland culture is not “savage,” and therefore exploring it is not dangerous. But her rhetoric may betray her. This “nameless pleasure” recalls the “nameless enchantment” of allowing her imagination to wander in the “sublime glens and glades.” She also spends considerable time thinking about what wandering in “savage” territory would be like:

The analogy betwixt the sensations I have been describing, and the intellectual pleasure derived from contemplating the human mind in its native state, opposed to that to which the highest culture can exalt it, holds very loosely. Were we to land on some savage island, where the foot of man has never trod, nor his hand removed incumbrance or opened access, we should be harrassed with fears and perplexed with intricacies. The tangled luxuriance of a thorny wild would obstruct our path; and from the gloom of the impenetrable thicket, the lurking tiger, or the envenomed serpent would seem ready to spring; and at least haunt the startled imagination (1: 3-4).

What began as a meditation on “intellectual pleasure” has ended up as a concern with “haunted imaginations.” She suggests that while speculating on *real* savages would be frightening, leading us into the darkest recesses of the human mind, the Highlanders are not savages. But even so, she still describes what these frightening feelings might be. What begins as a geographical metaphor (the “intellectual pleasure” of exploring an

island) slides into a psychological one (an “imagination ... haunted” by what it cannot control). What may really be lurking here is Grant’s fear of not being in strict control of her imagination or creative impulses, and the threat this poses to her authority of didactic “simplicity.” Again, the implication is that although imaginative excess occasionally happens, it is not necessarily morally destabilising. Interestingly, Grant seems to have some actual knowledge of the kind of mental dangers it does pose (one might speculate that this knowledge was obtained during her periods of “depression”).

Grant’s actual knowledge of the Highlanders is limited, based on popular history and myth. She depicts “the” Highlander as proud, noble, valiant and superstitious, making little distinction between those of the present day and the ancient Highlanders of the Ossianic past. Moreover, the Highlander (generally referred to as a “he”) has little control over his imagination. He is often lost in the “wild and wonderful” beliefs of his culture: “Reason might restrain, but could not extinguish that awful and undefined emotion,” the fear associated with imaginative excess (1: 41-2). The Highlander’s proneness to an “awful and undefined emotion” suggests the same indescribable “nameless enchantment” Grant claims to be so carefully avoiding. But at the same time, he is of a higher sensibility than the majority of those who live in civilized culture. Grant compares at length “modern refinement” with its easy pleasures and artificial ornamentation, to the “native purity and simplicity” of the Highlands (1: 57). Ostensibly, her *Essays* are designed to provide moral pleasure to (among others) the urban reader; but as I have suggested, she also uses the Highlanders to resolve some of her own discomfort with imagination and authority.

Much of her *Essays* is concerned with how the Highlanders, in spite of their heightened moral sensibility, are often led into dangerous excesses of the imagination: “[t]he untutored mind, which believes more than reason or revelation will warrant, concerning the world unseen, is often misled by the excess of imagination and sensibility!” (1: 125). Although Grant’s language places the Highlanders in a different time and place from

herself, they seem subject to a similar conflict as that which applies to her. They mean well, but cannot always control their own mental wanderings, and lose themselves easily in the “‘invisible world’ of the imagination.”

Her treatment of the superstitions of the Highlanders reflects her preoccupation with the relationship between morality, imagination and simplicity. Grant places the Highlanders in the “there and then” of cultural childhood, from her own perspective of the “here and now” of progress. They will someday follow the “path that leads to mental improvement” (62-3) and will have “deep and clear views on subjects the most important to a human being” (62). In the meantime, studying them produces moral pleasure:

We regard with pleasure the sports of infancy, because they belong to that interesting age. We know that the house built of twigs and sticks at the side of the brook, will not afford warmth or shelter; and we should despise the grown person who should so employ himself. Yet the very operation which in an adult, would seem a proof of hopeless imbecility, we should consider as an indication of ingenious activity in a child.

As I observed before, all nations have their childhood; and till they arrive at the stage of adolescence, that blended effort of the affections and the imagination, which pursues the shades of the departed; or like a prisoned bird, beats with restless impatience the boundaries that confine it, and struggles with instinctive ardour for liberty to range the wilds of space; that blind eagerness to know more of the future and invisible, which surrenders up the powerful and ardent mind, to so many weak illusions in the state under consideration - is no more the subject of contemptuous ridicule, than these imitative sports of our children, from which we draw a pleasing presage of their future capacity (2: 63-4).<sup>38</sup>

Grant constantly returns to a metaphor of mental freedom vs. limitations. The Highlanders are confined by their limited understanding and superstitious nature. They are at present subject to their imaginations; but when they begin to improve, they will become rational. When they emerge from a cultural “childhood” into “adolescence,” they will struggle to improve their minds, desiring like a caged bird to escape “the boundaries that confine it” and “range the wilds of space.” Although it is this very impulse against which Grant warns in her letters, here she imagines an intellectual freedom which corrects the mistaken conceptions of childhood. There is a possibility, it

seems, for a mental freedom which does not destabilise natural “simplicity.” This rhetoric may betray her own desire to escape her narrow boundaries of “simplicity” without forfeiting her didactic authority or the respectability she insists that it confers. As a woman writer with many negative associations of women’s writing, however, such a desire must have seemed frustratingly difficult to attain.

A fascination with the uneasy relationship between morality and imagination reappears in a different metaphor towards the end of her *Essays*, when she suggests that she is at times, not unlike the Highlanders themselves, easily drawn into the “devious path of fairy lore”:

I must no longer wander in the devious path of fairy lore, where new temptations to transgress my limits, assail me at every turning. There is some merit in leaving untold nursery legends, that rise to remembrance, connected with so many tender associations. I am sensible of hazarding a great deal, by descending so far into these minutias of antique lore, as I have done. It is indeed difficult to escape from the seduction of the subject. To a calm, reflecting, and unsophisticated mind, it has peculiar attractions, as opening a wide field of speculation on the most interesting of all merely speculative subjects, the progress of the human mind, in a very peculiar state: --a state adverse to artificial and external refinement; yet adapted to nourish all the finer emotions of the untaught and unregulated heart, and give scope to all the wild creation of excursive fancy. This latter peculiarity of primitive life, is fitted to take great hold on the imagination which, sheltered in retirement, and prompted by feeling, loves to range undisturbed through the wilds of enthusiasm (2: 290-1).

She attempts to cast this struggle as being between herself and her material: the material (Highland culture) seems to have the agency, threatening to “seduce” and “take hold” of her imagination. But the struggle she does not mention is one that is occurring between her desire to be writing a didactic text with fixed limits, and another kind of writing (or mental labour) which seems to be threatening these limits. And there is even another struggle, which is between herself and her own negative associations with writing. She seems to be constantly trying to convince herself that her writing really is as didactic as she claims it is. Her insistence on the right kind of feeling underlying her “wanderings” has a desperation to it, as if she feels constantly drowning in the writing which prevents



her from articulating herself. Her labour seems endless: trying to keep the wrong kind of writing out of something which is finally based on what is according to her own definition the wrong kind of writing.

So Grant shares a great deal with the Highlanders she has constructed in her essays. Beneath her apology for the Highlanders and their imaginative excess is a deeper concern with the problem of writing and responsibility. Uneasy with writing as a woman, she claims that didactic writing is of an entirely different order from many other kinds of writing. She is dealing with a similar problem here as was Johnson in his *Rambler* 4 article: Johnson was uncomfortable with the notion of what I earlier called “realistic writing,” that is, writing which exploits “curiosity without wonder”. For Johnson, the danger lies in the ability of the reader - particularly if that reader is young and susceptible - to identify with a class of fiction which describes the real world, not an imaginative world of dragons and witches. Such fiction, according to Johnson, because it is not obviously fiction, has the power to raise the wrong kind of passions in its readers; if it is not used responsibly, it can be dangerous. But in Grant’s thinking, the real problem is with a species of writing which sounds much more like what Johnson calls “romance” than realistic writing. Her objection to this kind of writing, like Johnson’s, is a concern about its ability to generate the wrong kind of feeling in its readers. In the passage below, she attacks one kind of “romance” writing, the Gothic novel, at the same time as she compares it to another kind of non-realistic narrative, the Highland superstition:

Let anyone that can feel and think, compare the sensation thus produced, with that resulting from a perusal of the laboured and accumulated terrors heaped up with unsparing profusion by a Radcliffe, a Lewis, or any other infidel magician of our own enlightened times. The stage is no doubt intended as deception, even when the powers of a Siddons give force to the illusion: of a puppet-show too, the worst one can say is, that it is a deception; yet, as far as the gross deception of a puppet-show falls short of the finest illusions of the theatre, so far do the laboured and exaggerated fictions, which have no prototype in the minds of their authors, fall short in producing the intended impression of the simple strokes of magical delusion, which originate in the “shuddering, meet, submitted thought” of a soul imbued with implicit faith in the legends of superstition (Vol 2: 253-4).

The ostensible point of this comparison is the power of narratives of the imagination over a person who believes in them: as a puppet show lacks the persuasive force of good theatre, so does the Gothic lack the persuasive force of belief in superstitions. The implication of this argument is that the Gothic genre is relatively ineffective, at least compared to Highland superstitions. In this way, it resembles Johnson's claims that "romance" or fantastic writing is not dangerous because it is obviously not about the reader's reality. On the other hand, according to Grant, the Highlanders do believe their superstitions to be real: their lack of firm boundaries between the world of imagination and reality means they cannot distinguish between truth and superstition in the same way that the more "enlightened" can.

But although Grant may appear to be echoing Johnson, she is really asking a different set of questions; or, perhaps more accurately, she is trying to reconcile slightly different problems from those formulated by Johnson. The real issue at stake, although Grant never articulates it as such, is how to deal responsibly with creative energy, particularly with what Grant sees as the darker impulses of the creative mind. The answer implied in this passage is that it is up to the writer, who, Grant believes, should leave the things turned up in the secret corners of the mind unwritten, something which she claims to be at least trying to do in her own writing. It seems to be this impulse which she associates with the wrong kind of writing, something which can be avoided by trying to respect strict representational boundaries. Although she dismisses the Gothic as being little better than a puppet show, her hostility towards it suggests that she is treating it as a scapegoat for another kind of writing she distrusts.<sup>39</sup> Expressions like the "sensations ... produced" from "accumulated terrors heaped up with unsparing profusion" suggest that Gothic fiction poses a rather different kind of threat than a puppet show. Grant defines the problem with Gothic fiction is that it does not produce the right kind of feeling in the reader. It is "exaggerated," having "no prototype in the minds of their authors," like the natural, unmediated feeling she claims to be providing. As well, Gothic fictions are not

trips into the uncultivated garden, but are rather like meanders into the “lion’s den”. Such an activity, to Grant, is both irresponsible and dangerous.

Unlike the Highlanders’ belief in superstition, Grant sees Gothic fiction attempting to erase necessary boundaries between imagination and reality. The real problem with Gothic writers goes back to Grant’s earlier distinction between landing on a “savage island” with its potential to “haunt the imagination” and exploring a “forest or fell” with its pleasing contrast to the more cultivated garden. One speculates on natural feeling, the other leads away from the real world, into the dark regions of the mind. The difference is articulated in Grant’s use of the words “simple” and “magic”: the Gothic writers are “infidel magicians,” sorcerers playing with the black arts, (253, 254) while the Highlanders are victims of “simple strokes of magical delusion”. The former have agency while the latter do not. Unlike the Gothic (and other) writers, it is not the Highlanders’ fault that their creative impulses sometimes lose track of the boundaries between truth and fiction. They are victims of themselves and are often terrified by their own imaginative excesses, over which they have little control. Unlike the Highlanders, Gothic writers do know better. So Grant aligns herself with the Highlanders indirectly at the level of intention: if she occasionally does become lost in the “impenetrable thicket” from which emerges “productions of ... fancy” which fill her with “disgust and indifference,” at least she realises the errors of her ways and tries to correct them. And she suggests possibilities for mental “wanderings” which are not necessarily immoral. This may be for Grant the best attempt she can muster to reconcile herself to the problem of her own writing.

There is an odd mixture of honesty and self-deception in Grant’s writing, as there is with Johnson. He admits that his speculations are based on having seen “but little,” that his plan of didactic ethnography exceeds his available material. Similarly Grant spends much time insisting that she is writing a text which is both simple and didactic; but at moments she admits, like Johnson, that other influences are threatening this text.

Negotiating the array of discourses that informs writing about the Highlands is clearly easier said than done.

## Chapter 4: Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections of a tour made in Scotland*

In 1803, the same year as Grant published her first edition of poems, Dorothy Wordsworth<sup>40</sup> travelled to the Highlands with her brother William, accompanied for part of the way by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Shortly after returning home, she began writing an account of this journey. There are many similarities between Dorothy's *Recollections of a Tour Made In Scotland, A.D. 1803* and Anne Grant's writing about the Highlands. In particular, both women use the Highlands to define a literary authority appropriate for a female writer. Like Grant, Dorothy employs a variety of strategies to define her literary authority, including foregrounding feeling and claiming an improving quality in the representation of this feeling. But there are also some significant differences between the two women as well. Dorothy avoids some of the pitfalls in Grant's model of authority, such as over-investing in didactic authority and asserting an emotional authenticity which cannot be proven. In fact, Dorothy is one of the few women in this period who manages to construct a "simple" literary authority with some success.

Dorothy's *Recollections* has a unique place among her literary output. It is more concerned than much of her other writing with the construction of an "appropriate" public literary persona. It was not published during her lifetime, in spite of much encouragement and several attempts at revision (including the editing of Samuel Rogers, who in 1820, helped her unsuccessfully to prepare the MS for publication). The reason for this unsuccessful publication history is uncertain. Some critics have suggested that it was a result of Dorothy's anxiety of authorship, a sense of literary inferiority which prevented her from publishing much of her writing because she could not see herself as a professional writer.

But although these comments suggest the same kind of anxiety of public authorship

which affected Anne Grant, I will argue here that even though the *Recollections* were not “finished” in her lifetime, probably for a variety of reasons including illness and lack of time, they nevertheless were intended for publication.<sup>41</sup> Because of this intent, the *Recollections* is concerned with constructing a literary persona which is distanced from the negative association with feminine writing. I am particularly interested in how Dorothy uses the Highlands in a variety of ways as a backdrop for the construction of this authority.

In fact, there is a connection between Dorothy Wordsworth and Anne Grant: Dorothy recalls reading Grant in an edition lent to her by Robert Southey. In a letter of 4 October, 1813, she notes that “My whole summer’s reading has been a part of two volumes of Mrs Grant’s *American Lady*” (*Letters: Middle Years: Vol 2*, 578-9). Testament to Grant’s didactic authority is William Wordsworth’s jocular recollection in a letter of 22 September 1821 of meeting a badly behaved young lady, whose behaviour is all the more astonishing when considering that she is, among other things, “an Elève of Mrs Grant of the Mountains!” (*Letters: Later Years: Vol 1*, 51). Although Dorothy Wordsworth began writing the *Recollections* in 1803 and Grant’s *Letters* were not published until 1807, at the same time, the *Recollections* were not finished until many years later. As she reworked them sporadically she would have become aware of Grant’s work and noted both its popularity and its generally favourable reviews by critics. Although direct influence cannot be proven, there are many similarities between the two writers which again confirms Grant’s influential model of didactic authority related to the Highlands.

But there is an important difference between Dorothy and Grant, which is their negotiation of the relationship between eighteenth-century notions of “truth” and “fiction”. both Johnson and Grant try to banish the literary as somehow detracting from the usefulness of their writing about Highlands. What is there to be learned is useful because it is not infected by misleading or dangerous fiction. Johnson fears “pleasing



error” while Grant claims constant wariness against the seduction of art. The literary in both cases undermines the stated goal of their texts. But Dorothy Wordsworth takes a different course. Part of a group of travelling writers, some flights of literary fancy. In one way, keeps her distance by projecting it onto William, but also

## Criticism

Much recent Dorothy Wordsworth criticism has ignored her connection to an earlier tradition of Eighteenth century women’s writing. Instead, she is often seen in contexts which are too limited to provide a full understanding of the different tensions and strategies in her writing. A brief examination of previous criticism on Dorothy Wordsworth will show the ways in which it has failed to address what I see as the more significant issues in her *Recollections*.

Where many critical discussions of Dorothy Wordsworth often see her writing either valuable as description,<sup>42</sup> or for the kind of personality it reveals,<sup>43</sup> more recent discussions have attempted to address its textual nature. However, many of these attempts lack a properly historical or theoretical framework through which to approach her writing, and as such often provide little more than an inventory of her published and non-published work.<sup>44</sup>

Much of this criticism uses feminist theory, but often, such approaches ignore the relevant historical background; in particular, these approaches usually fail to acknowledge fully the female literary tradition emerging through the eighteenth century. Instead, this criticism focuses on Dorothy’s relationship with Romanticism and other Romantic writers. Anne K. Mellor is one of the first feminist critics to address the issue of gender in Romanticism: in her book *Romanticism and Gender* she speculates on the masculinisation of Romantic discourse and describes what she sees as the female alienation from “Wordsworthian Romanticism”; for her, this kind of Romanticism valorises the male individual creative self which sought to possess verbally, and banish

through poetic othering, a silent, feminised nature. Elsewhere, she also criticises the accepted Romantic commitment to “the common man” and rural values, claiming instead that in reality the poets “upheld a hierarchical ordering of the arts inherited from the eighteenth century Enlightenment, a hierarchy that reinforced the élite who had access to Latin, Greek, and the classics of the past, in other words, males wealthy enough to gain an education at private schools and universities” (*Romanticism and Feminism*, 8).<sup>45</sup> But I believe that Mellor does not take fully into account the tradition of didactic sensibility with which Dorothy Wordsworth was associating herself. Other critics, such as Meena Alexander’s in her book, *Women in Romanticism*, similarly do not take into account this tradition, as I hope to do in this chapter. <sup>46</sup>

Other critics make similar suggestions, finding a resistance to the writing of male Romantics in a tradition which actually pre-existed it. Such studies imply that a comparison between women using traditional female literary forms and radical male experimentalists is relevant on the basis of contemporaneity alone. Like Mellor, Susan Levin accurately points out that romanticism as we have come to know it is “primarily a male cultural phenomenon” (178): but she goes on to make a case for what amounts to female literary superiority. Instead of the Oedipal anxieties described by her male contemporaries, Dorothy Wordsworth

possesses a consciousness that is simply not aggressive in the usual manner of Western, masculine humanity, a consciousness that does not enter into that “subjugation” her brother deplores, a consciousness that is in the continual process of realising not only *what* it is but *that* it is (181).

Levin does not take any notice of the discourse of sensibility, which is a significant influence on Dorothy’s writing, the means by which she constructs this “consciousness”. Instead, Levin suggests that while male writers are still wrestling with Oedipal complexes, women writers like Dorothy have reached emotional maturity.

Another writer who indirectly structures her study in terms of an unspoken competition between Dorothy and her brother is Margaret Homans. In *Women Writers and Poetic*

*Identity* Homans discusses how “the masculine self dominates and internalises otherness, that other is frequently identified as feminine, whether she is nature, the representation of a human woman, or some phantom of desire” (12); as such, she identifies Dorothy Wordsworth’s relationship with William as “the role of object of representation” (40) from which Dorothy must “revise her brother’s work” (41). Homans makes some very good observations of both William and Dorothy’s writing, but the structure of her argument leads her to look for ambivalence on Dorothy’s part to her brother’s poetic system. If there is evidence of such ambivalence, it is surely rather limited, and is a less important influence on her writing than the female literary tradition of this period.

My approach here is to at Dorothy in the light of the literary tradition that preceded her. In particular, she is very influenced by the discourse of the picturesque, an influence which has received limited attention from critics. In a study of 1964, Robert Nabholz explores the influence of the picturesque tradition on her writing. He points to passages in her writing which bear remarkable similarities to those of William Gilpin’s 1789 *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, on ... the High-Lands of Scotland*, a book owned by the Wordsworths.<sup>47</sup> Nabholz argues that the picturesque allowed Dorothy a means of “describing a visual beauty inherent in nature herself. ... For the picturesque was another means of penetrating to the wondrous activities of nature, which were of such central importance to the Romantics” (127-8).

The next critic to connect Dorothy and the picturesque is Robert Con Davis, who argues that her reliance on the picturesque reflects a lack of development compared to her brother’s later rejection of it in. Unlike Nabholz, Davis sees the picturesque as being full of artistic limitations, asserting that in “Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals [the picturesque] creates a kind of repetition that, in fusing emotions directly with an objectified landscape, excludes meaningful relationship between mind and nature in a denial of time” (48). According to Davis, William’s rejection of the picturesque as ““cold rules”” which failed when he “consulted nature and his feelings” was a significant

moment in the development of Romanticism. I do not feel that this kind of comparison is helpful. However, Davis does put his finger on an important difference: Dorothy's use of the picturesque makes her writing appear to be more amateur than that of William.

A later critic is more sensitive to the role of gender in the picturesque: William Snyder takes almost the opposite view as Davis, suggesting that William Wordsworth's mistake was to abandon the picturesque in favour of a sexist Romanticism, which represented the world in gendered terms: "While the writing of both William and Dorothy Wordsworth is incubated in the picturesque in the early 1790s, William leaves it behind to seek the divine in nature and, on his way, to characterise it as [female] nurture" (143). On the other hand, women, according to Snyder, referred to a more unhierarchical vision of nature enabled by the discourse of the picturesque:

This central feature of the picturesque, the blending of opposing qualities in landscape, thus prompts a new reading of the relation between nature and gender. A general, simplified view would hold picturesque texts as tempering masculine boldness, dynamism and reason with feminine delicacy, passivity and reflection. But a more specific, more complex view discloses these texts as explorations of a key paradox: how powerful natural forms and effects suggest, co-create or foster domesticity, community and sympathy - the province of both genders. In its mature stages, picturesque art goes beyond its definition of that which looks well in a picture. It reaches a point where imagination reconciles the vastness of natural forms such as mountains and sprawling valleys with shepherds, cottages and ruined abbeys. The process of integrating a variety of features in natural objects and atmospheres is an inclusive one which tests aesthetic depth without relinquishing control (144).

According to Snyder, Dorothy Wordsworth in particular "explores paradoxes of delight and care in rusticity and domesticity" (146). Snyder's analysis would have been stronger if he had given more analysis of the specific discourses Dorothy Wordsworth was drawing on in their eighteenth-century context.

An even more inaccurate attempt to bring together feminist criticism and aesthetic discourses such as the picturesque is by Elizabeth Bohls, whose *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716-1818* (1995), like some of the other critics we

have seen, ignores much of the relevant historical context surrounding women's writing of this period. Bohls begins with a feminist critique of the "masculine" aesthetic tourist: Addison, Burke and Gilpin all imply in their texts a masculine gaze with, at times, the object of perception - nature or the cultural Other - gendered as feminine. But although this critique is in some ways accurate, if not entirely original<sup>48</sup>, she moves on to an oversimplified discussion of what she takes to be a female critique of masculinist discourse. Although women were "tolerated as second class practitioners or passive consumers" (2), they still laid bare the flaws of aesthetic discourse, she argues. According to Bohls, women challenged two things. The first is "the idea that it is possible to make universally applicable generalizations about 'the' subject of aesthetic appreciation," and the second is "the autonomy of the aesthetic domain from moral ... concerns"(7).

Like Snyder's study, this works better on a theoretical level than it does in practice. Her textual evidence does not fully support her theoretical position: her chapter on Dorothy claims that comments which are not necessarily gender specific are evidence of a female challenge to male aestheticism. Although Bohls notes that Dorothy Wordsworth is guilty of many of the same instances of "rhetorical" distancing as male aesthetic tourists, she also insists that, "Amid her scenic descriptions Wordsworth inserts evocations of the rural Scots' inner lives and meditations on their multidimensional relationships with the places where they dwell" (189). As an example of this, Bohls cites a passage where Wordsworth describes a shepherd in a field who was, "sitting upon the ground, reading, with the book on his knee, screened from the wind by his plaid, while a flock of sheep were feeding near him among the rushes and coarse grass" (quoted in Bohls, 212). Of this passage Bohls says,

To include the act of reading suggests an independent subjectivity; it de-aestheticizes the shepherd. More than a staffage figure in a pastoral landscape, he becomes a human agent in history, participating in the high level of literacy that the Wordsworths have noticed among Scotland's laboring classes (189).

Bohls' mention of both "the Wordsworths" in this instance is a challenge to her own

argument: as Dorothy describes it in the *Recollections*, William seems to comment more on issues of literacy than she does; and both of them, not just Dorothy, comment on poverty and speculate on the Highlanders' inner lives. Not only does Bohls completely ignore the other discourses influencing this description, she also ignores the role the discourse of moral sensibility plays in what she calls a discourse of ethics.

Another study by Lucinda Cole and Richard Schwartz draws on historical sources to argue more convincingly that the discourse of aesthetics was a sign of class and education, a discourse spoken by the educated classes although made to appear as a "natural" discourse, "a universal possibility available to all, but only by obscuring the concrete, socially conditioned forms of dispossession that such an aesthetic education necessarily implies" (144). They assert that in the early Romantic period, aesthetic discourse "has become an index of one's position in the market of official aesthetic and literary discourse" (145). Cole and Schwartz argue that women were implicated in the construction of this aesthetic discourse, a discourse which they both inherited and helped to promote. Women well understood that in spite of its appearance, the discourse of aesthetics is specialised and "far from ... intuitive" (144). Although this study is primarily interested in the construction of the illiterate poor, and more generally in how "literary culture is formed in relationship to struggles over the meaning and value of literacy, linguistic competency, and cultural distinction" (147), they also make the point that women writers, such as Ann Yearsley and Dorothy participated as much as men (although differently) in the manipulation of aesthetics as a "natural" discourse. Cole and Schwartz end with a less biased conclusion than Dorothy's other critics: "we mean neither to suggest that Dorothy's is a morally superior vision nor to deny its obvious political problems, but merely to identify a form of power that, as Nancy Armstrong puts it, 'does not seem to be power because it behaves in specifically female ways'" (159).

But for all of Cole and Schwartz's theoretical sophistication, their discussion of Wordsworth inaccurately implies (as does Bohls') that her text is primarily a treatise on



aesthetic tourism. While all of the above critics are right to look to Dorothy's use of the picturesque as being somehow distinct from that of male writers, they fail to acknowledge the influence of moral sensibility on her writing. Like Grant, much of Dorothy's literary authority is constructed around what she claims to be an ability to feel the "simplicity" of the Highlands. A rhetoric of feeling then tends to displace other discourses as the source of Dorothy's literary authority.

When the travellers see a mysterious woman sitting on her own, Dorothy appears to be employing the kind of discourse that Bohls would associate with male aesthetic writers and that Cole and Schwartz could see as an aestheticization of the rural poor in an apparently "intuitive" discourse. The real marker of gender here, however, is the way in which this aesthetic discourse is turned into a rhetoric of feeling which defines Dorothy's literary authority:

we discovered a woman sitting right in the middle of the field, alone, wrapped up in a gray cloak or plaid. She sat motionless all the time we looked at her, which might be nearly half an hour. We could not conceive why she sat there, for there were neither sheep nor cattle in the field; her appearance was very melancholy ... there was so much obscurity and uncertainty about her, and her figure agreed so well with the desolation of the place, that we were indebted to the chance of her being there for some of the most interesting feelings that we had ever had from natural objects connected with man in dreary solitariness (24).

Dorothy begins by constructing the woman as an aesthetic symbol of the landscape - "melancholy," "obscure" and "uncertain," in a way that "agreed ... well with the desolation of the place". But feeling soon takes over the description in a way in which these critics ignore. She and her co-travellers were grateful "to the chance of [the woman] being there" less for the spectacle she generated, than the "most interesting feelings that we had ever had from natural objects connected with man". That these "interesting feelings" are described in terms as vague as Grant's "a kind of nameless pleasure" reflects Dorothy's construction of a literary authority based on a positive sensibility which is both inalienable and insubstantial. But Dorothy's narrative skill is in appearing to be writing from inside these positive feelings she describes: she emphasises

the importance of these “interesting feelings” by noting that for “nearly half an hour” everything else was forgotten. Here and elsewhere, feeling is depicted as being an end in itself: later, she recalls asking for directions from a man on a horse, noting,

He was a complete Highlander in dress, figure and face, and a very fine-looking man, hardy and vigorous, though past his prime. While he stood waiting for us in his bonnet and plaid, which never looks more graceful than on horseback, I forgot our errand, and only felt glad that we were in the Highlands (87).

The visual pleasure of the picturesque is constantly transformed into the affective pleasure of moral sensibility which takes precedence over any other kind of narrative strategy. Good feeling, displacing the pragmatics of everyday life, makes the effort of travelling worthwhile: “I only felt glad that we were in the Highlands”. Dorothy is very carefully asserting her justification for writing as being a modest recollection of positive feelings. Although limited, however, it invokes the values which had been attributed to Highland primitivism by the discourse of moral sensibility by Blair and others.

Sensibility, then, is the key to Dorothy’s construction of her literary persona, subsuming other discourses such as the picturesque and primitivism. Describing a man in a grey plaid, for example, she notes that “There was a scriptural solemnity in this man’s figure, a sober simplicity which was most impressive. Scotland is the country above all others that I have seen, in which a man of imagination may carve out his own pleasures” (25-6). Although this begins as a picturesque moment (the man embodies picturesque contrast, “scriptural solemnity” at the same time as “sober simplicity,” while she is clearly positioned as a distanced observer), it slides into a remark on feeling (presumably, Dorothy Wordsworth includes herself as a “man of imagination”). What is really important, it is implied, is not so much the aesthetic moment as the ability to “carve out ... pleasures,” to produce the right kind of feeling. The man who starts out the passage as an aesthetic symbol of Highland contrast winds up as an affirmation of the affective capacity rhetorically driving Dorothy’s text.

Dorothy constantly emphasises the importance of feeling as it is brought out by her

experience of travelling. Of walking on a moor, she writes,

I seem to be drawn more closely to nature in such places than anywhere else; or rather I feel more strongly the power of nature over me, and am better satisfied with myself for being able to find enjoyment in what unfortunately to many persons is either dismal or insipid (25).

Dorothy is constructing her literary persona as one able to find “enjoyment” as its most basic level (an appreciation of “nature”), using two rhetorical strategies. In her description of finding this enjoyment, she seems to play a passive role while “nature” itself takes on the active agency. Like Grant claiming that the real origin of her poetry is in its “location,” Dorothy backgrounds her literary agency, suggesting that location (“nature”) is the real source of her inspiration. Another technique similar to Grant’s is Dorothy’s strategy of defining herself against those who cannot share her positive experience of nature, those who find it “dismal or insipid,” recalling Grant’s distancing herself from those who rely on “ornament” and “exaggeration” instead of consulting nothing but “nature and truth”. These two strategies disown writing by foregrounding feeling at the same time as they background literary agency. But at the same time as Dorothy and Grant use similar strategies, there are also some significant differences between how each constructs her authority. The most striking difference is probably Dorothy’s refusal to overinvest in didactic authority: although she distinguishes herself from those who find nature “dismal or insipid,” her main claim is a modest one, the appreciation of the simple pleasure of walking on a moor. Unlike Grant, she only occasionally draws a distinction between her modest, unmediated sensibility and those who are unable to feel this kind of pleasure. Although Grant appears to be making more use of moral sensibility, turning it into didactic authority, in fact it is Dorothy who is better exploiting the philosophy. By insisting on a didactic authority based on authentic feeling, Grant is always haunted by the possibility of inauthenticity, that her writing is fictional. Unlike Grant, Dorothy avoids demanding that the reader learn from an emotional configuration which she may not be able to prove that she herself shares. Where Grant must constantly insist on her literary “simplicity,” I will explore below how Dorothy by contrast appears more successfully to enact it, avoiding any real

commitment to a didactic authority in her invocation of moral sensibility.

So while Dorothy uses some similar techniques as Grant for defining an authority based on positive feeling rather than on writing, at the same time, she avoids many of Grant's more problematic strategies. Instead of shifting responsibility onto the reader to appreciate her sincere feelings, Dorothy seems to enact this feeling more successfully. One of the techniques she uses to do so is to describe her ongoing appreciation of Highland simplicity: she does not explicitly claim to share this simplicity but her evocative description of her appreciation of it suggests that she does. Dorothy, then, is more successful than Grant at constructing a sense of emotional authenticity in her depiction of the Highlands. Her ability to evoke "simple" feelings makes her experience of the Highlands appear all the more "genuine". The following passage echoes Johnson's "fixing" of the Highlands near Luss in a pseudo-scientific discourse; but in this version, feeling seems more "true" than accepted wisdom:

We were now entering into the Highlands. I believe Luss is the place where we were told that country begins; but at these cottages I would have gladly believed that we were there, for it was like a new region. The huts were after the Highland fashion, and the boys who were playing wore the Highland dress and philabeg. On going into a new country I seem to myself to waken up, and afterwards it surprises me to remember how much alive I have been to the distinctions of dress, household arrangements, etc. etc., and what a spirit these little things give to the wild, barren, or ordinary places (67).

Like Johnson isolating the speaking of Gaelic and peat fires as the signs of entering "the Highlands," Dorothy marks off similar signs of cultural difference as the point at which the "new region" of the Highlands begins. But for Dorothy, it is through feeling rather than deduction that she appears to apprehend the "essence" of the Highlands. Her claim to be "alive" to the signs of cultural difference and her consequent ability to appreciate places which are "wild, barren," or rather more modestly just "ordinary" suggests a more authentic representation of them. This passage constructs a moment of cultural discontinuity affirmed by her emotional reaction rather than what they had been "told": her positive response ("gladly believed," "aliveness" and "wakening up") signifies a

level of authenticity in her depiction of the experience. Emphasising a capacity for positive feeling recalls Mary Anne Hanway's earlier pointing to her willingness to experience the Highlands rather than trying to make an intellectual "conquest" of it like Johnson; like Hanway's implication that her emotional truth is correcting Johnson's biased misrepresentation, there is the suggestion that Dorothy's honest feeling is a better way to judge a "new country" than in going by what one gets "told".

Her ability to evoke a sense of emotional authenticity makes her seem as down-to-earth as the Highlanders themselves, as well as making her experiential authority appear all the more compelling. Dorothy also uses references to "simplicity" to align herself with the Highlanders. In the passage below, for example, feeling seems to confirm the authenticity of a Highland hut at the same time as it establishes a connection between Dorothy and another Highlander:

This was the first genuine Highland hut we had been in. We entered by the cowhouse, the house-door being within, at right angles to the outer door. The woman was distressed that she had a bad fire, but she heaped up some dry peats and heather, and, blowing it with her breath, in a short time raised a blaze that scorched us into comfortable feelings (95).

This passage suggests an emotional authenticity confirmed by her ability to appreciate the experience of the hut. The details she records (the door to the house, the woman's breath on the fire, the physical sensation of warmth) evoke the bare elements of existence and become part of the emotional contour of the experience. The change in emotional state ("a blaze that scorched us into comfortable feelings") seems to demonstrate the travellers' ability to participate, however indirectly, in the woman's simplicity. Simplicity reflects back on Dorothy, without her insisting that the reader approach her text as being purely non-fictional in the way that Grant does.

Another strategy which enables Dorothy apparently to enact her emotional authenticity is her claimed inability to articulate these simple pleasures. Although she does not elaborate on the positive feelings which are the rhetorical source of her writing, her

silence seems to be evidence of how simple they really are. Her refusal to elaborate seems to be a sign that she is an amateur writer, lacking the necessary skill to represent her experience fully. The silence of a modest, unliterary simplicity allows her to achieve a much greater unity of form and content in her writing of the “simple” than does Grant. For example, Dorothy sometimes even seems to be slightly embarrassed to describe otherwise unremarkable moments because of the intense yet indescribable feelings they provided. She recalls looking through a window at a house in Dumbarton, for example, and describes the view of a “a smoky vessel lying at anchor”: “Perhaps you will think that there is not much in this, as I describe it: it is true; but the effect produced by these simple objects, as they happened to be combined, together with the gloom of the evening, was exceedingly wild” (57). Pointing out both her love of the simple and her lack of rhetorical mastery in a direct address to the reader (“perhaps you will think there is not much in this”) apparently lowers the reader’s expectations to her own unaffected simplicity. Elsewhere, after describing a boat trip, she notes, “Here I ought to rest, as we rested, and attempt to give utterance to our pleasure: but indeed I can impart but little of what we felt” (98). By claiming to be unable to “give utterance” to what is really important - feeling - Dorothy seems to disown literariness as part of her modest authority. She turns the difficulty of describing the kind of emotional configuration posited by sensibility to her advantage, as if her inarticulacy further evidence that feeling pre-exists writing.

Thus she aligns herself with the key words used by Grant, “pleasure,” “kindness” and “simplicity,” without taking the risks posed by Grant’s over-investment in didacticism. In the sudden absence of other descriptive background these words come to evoke an essential human quality which the reader shares. This “simplicity of manner” sounds like that described by David Hume when he gives an example of the kind of pleasure evoked by simple writing. Like Anne Grant, Dorothy Wordsworth is indirectly aligning herself with this kind of female simplicity, with its various implications for her literary authority. In particular she often links the word “pleasure” to moments of exchange, both



real and symbolic. After receiving feathers as a gift from a woman she is visiting, for instance, she writes, "I was much pleased with the gift, which I shall preserve in memory of her kindness and simplicity of manners, and the Highland solitude where she lived" (94).

"Pleasure" evokes a range of feeling associated with human connection: the seeming understatement of the word suggests a connection which can take place in spite of barriers of communication, class and culture, particularly in the Highlands where life appears to exist in its original simplicity. There is a contrast posited in the use of the term "simplicity," which Dorothy does not make explicit, between rural "solitude" and urban affectation. The lack of descriptive detail suggests a timelessness, as if describing something of the very essence of our common humanity in this gift of feathers. Two pages later another moment of exchange is similarly marked by the pleasure it produces: "The woman of the house was very kind; whenever we asked her for anything it seemed a fresh pleasure to her that she had it for us" (96). The pared-down language evokes a sense of the essential simplicity of human connection: there is an unspoken parallel between the unaffected pleasure of Highland simplicity and the unaffected simplicity of Dorothy's style. In spite of - or perhaps because of - the absence of linguistic mediation (a shared first language of English and Dorothy's claimed lack of literary sophistication) an important connection seems to have been made. But this connection is devious: once again the discourse of sensibility works to affirm Dorothy's experiential authority while downplaying the role of writing. Her unaffected style appears to reflect her ability to be "alive" to the positive feelings available in the Highlands, a place where simplicity and kindness still exist in their originary form and are not debased by the affectation associated with urban culture.

Another key word in the *Recollections* is "fire". Dorothy often uses fire as a symbol for human connection at its most basic level, suggesting the same element of exchange associated with the word "pleasure". Visiting another home, for example, she writes:

When I had been there before tea I had observed what a contrast there was between the mistress and her kitchen; she did not differ in appearance from an English country lady; but her kitchen, roof, walls, and floor of mud, was all black alike; yet now, with the light of a bright fire upon so many happy countenances, the whole room made a pretty sight (90-1).

In the glow of firelight, cultural difference seems to dissolve and simple feelings take over. Fire turns what is otherwise a dark hovel into a “pretty sight,” a symbol of family warmth and connection in which she is an emotional participant. Elsewhere, fire draws Dorothy closer to another Highland woman:

As to fire, there was little sign of it, save the smoke, for a long time, she having no fuel but green wood, and no bellows but her breath. My eyes smarted exceedingly, but the woman seemed so kind and cheerful that I was willing to endure it for the sake of warming my feet in the ashes and talking to her (135).

Again, Dorothy places herself in this scene as one with such unaffected simplicity that she is willing to undergo physical discomfort for the sake of connection with this woman. The earthy language is understated, but highly appealing: fire, with all its elemental significance, draws the two women together, both physically and symbolically. But for all their apparent lack of affectation, these scenes say a good deal about how carefully Dorothy is constructing her authority as a recorder of events who makes no claims to literariness. Her own feminine sensibility is being put, however modestly, on display, as she adeptly suggests her ability to identify with the “simple” Highlanders.

But perhaps one of Dorothy’s most sustained strategies for constructing her feminine authority is in her depiction of the relationship she describes with her brother. William Wordsworth takes on the role of the “poet,” a role which has significant implications for Dorothy’s authorial persona. Dorothy appears not to be “writing” in a literary sense, in part because William Wordsworth is “the” artist; her own attempts are depicted as modest efforts of description aimed at providing a background for the real poet. (Interestingly, as the character who carries the burden of writing, William is a much more positive figure than the women writers who stand accused of “dazzling”

literariness in Grant's texts.) Dorothy, then, while sharing Grant's anxiety of appearing to engage in inappropriate writing, does not share Grant's hostility towards a kind of dangerous "literary" writing. While Dorothy points to the writing taking place elsewhere than in her own text, it is an admiring, not an accusing finger that she is pointing.

Much critical attention has been devoted to Dorothy Wordsworth's literary relationship with her brother. While earlier critics saw her as important insofar as she could provide information on William<sup>49</sup>, more recently criticism has made a different case, arguing that the relationship with William effectively silenced her own writing. Margaret Homans, for example, suggests that Dorothy was William's "amanuensis," "largely accept[ing] this romantic role, allowing her writing to be appropriated by it" (40); James Holt MacGavran Jr. argues that she paid a "terrible price" through her relationship to her brother, the denial of a firm sense of self (232); and Meena Alexander argues that through "her staunch devotion to William's genius" she created the "figure of a powerful brother composing in an impossible fluency" which led to her own literary repression.<sup>50</sup> But these discussions focus on what, given the relationship with William, Dorothy did not say, that she might otherwise have said. A more productive approach, however, is from the opposite direction: what the relationship with William enabled Dorothy to write, allowing her a safe "modest" distance from writing as well as a more positive representation of what "writing" is. Whatever repression there may have been, Dorothy was nevertheless a prolific writer who received much support from her brother. And any repression is probably more due to a general climate in which many women were uncomfortable with writing than with William in particular. More recent critics have argued that the relationship was a more productive one: James Soderholm sees the literary relationship between the two as being much more productive than critics such as Levin and Homans allow; Eric C. Walker argues that in at least one instance, William's poetry is influenced by his sister's writing; and Helen Boden asserts that in the *Continental Journals*, she has her own literary agenda, in spite of her brother's influence.<sup>51</sup> In her *Recollections*, it is this very construction of the figure of a great

brother-poet which allows her to deflect attention away from her own literariness, thereby giving her more freedom than a writer like Anne Grant. While Dorothy may have appeared to be William's adoring satellite, this was in many ways part of her own literary agenda of constructing a narrative authority unhindered by associations with unfeminine writing.

Dorothy and William use each other's writing to define their respective literary authorities. His writing provides "poetic" interpretations of the landscape which make her descriptions seem less literary, while her writing provides details to support his distilled poetic essences. In his collection of poems, *Yarrow Revisited*, William quotes some of Dorothy's *Recollections* with the following supplementary note in an Appendix at the back of the book:

This sonnet describes the *exteriour* of a Highland hut, as often seen under morning or evening sunshine. The reader may not be displeased with the following extract from the Journal of a Lady, my fellow traveler in Scotland, in the autumn of 1803, which accurately describes, under particular circumstance, the beautiful appearance of the *interior* of one of these rude habitations (38).

It is little surprise that he marks his sister's writing with gender and domesticity, distinct from his own: he writes the "*exteriour*" (sic) while she describes the "*interior*". He also notes that the kind of feeling associated with her writing is one of "pleasure" associated with her "accurate description". His construction of her as being no more than a careful describer of background is one which she herself would undoubtedly have appreciated. Like Grant opposing her own "truth of delineation" to poetic "dazzle," female authority exists in descriptive writing, the "feminine impressions" suggested by Elizabeth Isabella Spence, rather than in literariness. The supplemental quality of this "note" suggests a distinction between a masculine representation of the landscape, whose function is to generalise (depicting how "Highland huts" are "often seen"), and a feminine one, whose role by contrast is to particularise with "accurate description". Both writers want to evoke a sense of Highland life, exploiting the malleability of Highlandism, each influenced by a different construction of gender.

In fact, Dorothy uses the presence of male travellers to appear more “modest”. Although she is part of the “we” of the travellers, she still makes it clear that she occupies a different role from her brother and Coleridge. When Dorothy, William and Coleridge are taken to a famous valley of echoes, she marks her modest distance from the two men:

This is saying little: it was the most distinct echo that it is possible to conceive. It shouted names of our fireside friends in the very tone in which William and Coleridge spoke; but it seemed to make a joke of me, and I could not help laughing at my own voice, it was so shrill and pert, exactly as if some one had been mimicking it very successfully, with an intention of making me ridiculous (40-1).

Where the men enjoy shouting, Dorothy appears more self-conscious. Shouting alongside the two men would seem like a transgressive act and Dorothy hears self-mockery in her own echo: it sounds “shrill” and “pert,” and makes her feel “ridiculous”. As well as marking what is probably a real discomfort with the sound of her own voice, she is also pointing out her own modest distance from an inappropriate self-articulation; instead she appears to have a strong sense of shame which censors any improper female behaviour.

Grant’s discomfort with writing leads her to banish it elsewhere, as something done by women who are less attentive than herself to patrolling their literary-sexual boundaries. She insists on her dislike of female writing, aligning herself instead with what she calls a more “masculine” style. Dorothy also suggests that there is a masculine kind of writing, but it is one undertaken by her brother, not by herself. He writes poetry, while she gives some description and refers to her happy feelings. She quotes William’s statements and poetry, emphasising the distinction between his masculine literary authority and her feminine modesty. Recalling the words of a woman asking them where they were going, for example, Dorothy writes,

One of them said to us in a friendly, soft tone of voice, “What! You are stepping westward?” I cannot describe how affecting this simple expression was in that remote place, with the western sky in front, yet glowing with the departed sun. William wrote the following poem long after, in remembrance of his feelings and mine (221).

Transcribing her brother's poem not only supports her claim that this scene was strongly moving, but also reinforces Dorothy's claim to simplicity. It disperses literary responsibility, between herself and her brother, William taking a larger share. She "cannot describe" the effect of this "simple expression" although William, as a real poet, can; her feelings are, like the woman's words, so "simple" as that they defy description by anyone but a real poet.

So Dorothy uses William's writing to define her own. Marking a distinction between his poetry and her "descriptive" writing allows her much more freedom to write creatively without appearing to do so. William wanders in and out of her text, taking on the burden of being "the writer" while she appears modest and unliterary, a mute, adoring sister.

Recalling the vision of a young boy on a hill, for example, she quotes William:

His appearance was in the highest degree moving to the imagination: mists were on the hillsides, darkness shutting in upon the huge avenue of mountains, torrents roaring, no house in sight to which the child might belong; his dress, cry, and appearance all different from anything we had been accustomed to. It was a text, as William has since observed to me, containing in itself the whole history of the Highlander's life - his melancholy, his simplicity, his poverty, his superstition, and above all, that visionariness which results from a communion with the unworldliness of nature (116).

William the poet offers the essence of this vision: his role here is to convert the boy into "text," to make him into a poetic symbol. Dorothy's transcription of his words implies that hers are, by contrast, purely descriptive. She appears merely to remark on her feelings, although it is evident that her own writing is as much "text" as is William's: mists on hillsides, darkness shutting in, torrents roaring all reflect her unacknowledged debt to Ossian.

The gendered literary labour here appears to recall Spence's division of travel writing between "metaphysical reasonings" and "feminine impression". But much of this division is only rhetorical: in fact, Dorothy's characterisation of herself and her brother according to this division is quite devious. One example of this is a word which is given



a different inflection by each sibling: the word “pleasure”. For Dorothy, “pleasure” reflects her construction of an unmediated experience of feeling, for William it suggests his conversion of feelings and experience to text. Both describe a visit to a Highland hut: Dorothy, not surprisingly, describes her impression of the interior, noting that it would remain “a living image ... to my dying day”. William, however, describes the “exterior”: “The following poem was written by William not long after our return from Scotland” (113) she writes, followed by a transcription of the poem. “To a Highland Girl” is influenced by Dorothy’s notion of “simple pleasure,” but it transforms this into a way of essentializing the landscape. William takes over Dorothy’s “pleasure” to define a different, artistic kind. He describes the simple pleasures obtained by domestic details, valorising the rustic charms of the young girl’s “homely ways and dress”. But the “happy pleasure” of feeling a part of the scene soon changes to a semi-eroticised one in which the girl represents the Otherness of a feminized nature (standing behind a metaphorical “veil just half withdrawn”). The girl becomes “a vision,” “Like something fashion’d in a dream” with which he must find a way to interact. As an image, she resists his appropriation several times: not only can he not communicate with her because she speaks Gaelic and is part of a different culture, but he knows that he has no place in her life, no “claim” on her. The “grave reality” is that she is to him nothing more than “a wave/Of the wild sea.” Instead he takes home a “new pleasure,” learning to “priz[e]” the “eyes” of his “memory” which will be able to recreate the essence of this girl.

The pleasure of converting the girl into a remembered image in the mind’s eye is so strong that the poet here seems to forget that he is ostensibly addressing her, and the poem’s “you” slides into the third person: “I feel this place is made for her;/To give new pleasure like the past/Continued long as life shall last”. As she becomes increasingly less a person in her own right, and more a symbol for the speaker to appropriate, the poet is “pleased at heart” to leave her, knowing he will carry her image as the “Spirit” of the world around him. Pleasure for Wordsworth is a fascination with the half-veiled body and the inability fully to know it.<sup>52</sup>

“Pleasure” is a key word for both William and Dorothy. For William it is associated with writing, at least writing in the sense that Grant claimed to despise it: something which disconnected feeling from the thing itself, exaggeration and distortion. But for William, the pleasure is in converting the girl into a poetic remembrance. For Dorothy, on the other hand, “pleasure” is about the absence of textual mediation, a direct connection with the Highlanders. Pleasure for her happens in moments of connection in which cultural boundaries are transcended. In Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Recollections*, then, William is the one apparently to convert feeling into poetry; Dorothy Wordsworth by contrast seems to remain one step removed from this process, seeming only to describe - indeed, often pointing to her failure to describe - natural or domestic detail and the feeling it evokes. She seems to depict her journey in the opposite direction to William, valorising the immediacy of feeling while he emphasises the mediation of feeling by art.

Dorothy aligns herself with Highland “simplicity” with much more literary ease than Grant. She has an understanding of the delicate nature of claiming “simplicity” which Grant lacks, knowing that to appear to be simple must simultaneously appear to be unaware of the possibility of insincerity. Ironically, Dorothy’s careful construction of her apparent simplicity suggests a textual manipulation much more sophisticated than Grant: Dorothy is better at using literariness to efface literariness than Grant. This narrative control in fact may be what has seduced many critics into aligning Dorothy’s narrative persona with the real Dorothy. But to do this is to ignore Dorothy’s real literary achievement, which is the artistic deployment of these different discourses.

## Chapter 5: Elizabeth Hamilton and Mary Brunton

We have seen how the discourse of moral sensibility helped to construct the Highlands as a source of authority for both men and women. But as well as the variety of non-fictional texts we have seen, the Highlands are also found in the didactic novel, women's primary literary genre for up to a century. Writers like Elizabeth Hamilton, Mary Brunton and Susan Ferrier used the Highlands to situate their didacticism, either embodying a charming lack of refinement or an unattractive one. This chapter will explore two novels written during this period, Hamilton's *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808) and Brunton's *Discipline* (1815) in terms of different strategies of self-authorisation using the problematic discourse of Highlandism.

Ina Ferris observes that in the early nineteenth century, the novel was the site of much discussion in literary periodicals. Between 1801 and 1814, for example, the novel gains some legitimacy for women writers, but mainly as a didactic form. Maria Edgeworth, for example, is careful to distinguish herself from novels of the wrong kind in her Advertisement to *Belinda* (1801):

The following work is offered to the public as a Moral Tale - the author not wishing to acknowledge a Novel. Were all novels like those of Madame de Crousaz, Mrs Inchbald, Miss Burney, or Dr. Moore, she would adopt the name of novel with delight: But so much folly, error, and vice are disseminated in books classed under this denomination, that it is hoped the wish to assume another title will be attributed to feelings that are laudable, and not fastidious (Preface).

Edgeworth carefully aligns herself with the didactic tradition in writing, and the plot of her narration is a variation on the conduct manual literature. Fourteen years later, women were still wrestling with these attitudes towards writing. In 1814, Fanny Burney criticises the attitudes that associate the novel with questionable morality but still uses the term to describe her own work, *The Wanderer*:

The power of prejudice annexed to nomenclature is universal: the same being who,

unnamed, passes unnoticed, if preceded by the title of a hero, or a potentate, catches every eye, and is pursued with clamorous praise, or, - its common reverberator! - abuse: but in nothing is the force of denomination more striking than in the term Novel; a species of writing which, though never mentioned, even by its supporter, but with a look that fears contempt, is not more rigidly excommunicated, from its appellation, in theory, than sought and fostered, from its attractions, in practice (Dedication, *Wanderer*, xxi).

Burney defends it on the grounds that dismissing it because it is fiction, while extolling other forms such as the “epic poem,” ignores the fact that Milton must of course have used some invention in his poetry. But even though Burney uses the term to describe *The Wanderer*, she still appeals to the novel as a didactic form: “[I]s not a Novel, permit me, also, to ask, in common with every other literary work, entitled to receive its stamp as useful, mischievous, or nugatory, from its execution?” Her own work, she insists, is little more than beneficial for young readers: giving “to juvenile credulity knowledge of the world, without ruin, or repentance; and the lessons of experience, without its tears” (xxi).

Both Hamilton and Brunton insist that their novels are didactic. And both were influenced by Anne Grant’s construction of her literary authority out of her experience of the Highlands, in spite of its problems. Also Grant knew both writers. She comments on each in a letter of 27 February, 1811: “Now, as to Self-Control [Brunton’s new novel]; it is not Miss Hamilton’s, nor is it the work of any one of the many it is ascribed to. The secret has, as yet, been carefully concealed and all curiosity eluded; but I am fixed in the opinion that it was born in Orkney” (*Letters*, 283). The reference here is to Mary Brunton, who indeed came from Orkney. Grant also knew Elizabeth Hamilton: In a letter of 24 March, 1814, Grant recalls a party in which she dined with Elizabeth Hamilton at which the two along with several others “all did wonderfully well” (*Letters*, 41). As well, both Hamilton and Brunton pay literary tribute to Grant, Hamilton by sending her a copy of one of her books in 1819 and Brunton by referring to *Superstitions* in her novel *Discipline*. Grant’s popularity led both writers to exploit the didactic potential of the Highlands. But at the same time, both novelists use the Highlands differently. Another writer who inspired some interest in novel-writing about Scotland

was Walter Scott, who by the time *Waverley* was published in 1814 was already very well known as a poet.

Didactic writing is an aspect of the female novel tradition which many critics have found notoriously problematic. With its questionable origins in conduct manual literature, the didacticism of many women's novels in this period seems to betray a complicity with patriarchal authority, promoting the idea that good female behaviour was submissive and modest. But to be modest also required not committing acts of public self-exhibitionism, a prime example of which is writing. Women's writing, then, to espouse private morality, had to account for its own possibly hypocritical existence, a public woman disdaining public women. Many women, as I argued in my introduction, followed Samuel Richardson's model, who himself drew on eighteenth century conduct manuals, claiming to be "teaching" the virtues of modesty and chastity. Richardson's influential model of feminine writing in particular claims to be preserving the boundaries of female modesty, publishing in order to teach women not to do inappropriate things like publish.

But given its origin in a patriarchal model of private female morality, critics have generally attempted either to rationalise or to deny didacticism: few have fully come to terms with it. Some early critics take didactic claims at face value. Hazel Mews, for example, outlined in 1969 some of the reasons why women wrote: "Many wrote for moral and instructive ends, using the novel as a means to those ends" (7), arguing for instance that Maria Edgeworth used writing for education, not education as a justification for writing. Several decades later, however, critics still seem largely unable to contextualise didactic writing. Dale Spender takes on the subject of women writers before Jane Austen and largely ignores the issue of the didacticism of many of them. Spender sees these novels as women's "intellectual foodstuffs" which were "nothing short of subversive in their own context" and as such, had to be "suppressed" by patriarchal critics (5). In her reading of Mary Brunton, for example, she argues that "it is important to avoid the portrayal of Mary Brunton as simply a straight and sober soul

who wrote fictional moral tracts” (326). She admits that Brunton’s “pious prose” is “intrusive, even jarring” but treats this as a minor drawback simply to be overlooked, confessing that her own approach to Brunton was to “skip[] the pages” on which her “overt use of Christian dogma appeared” (325). Spender’s use of the term “Christian dogma” here is clever but misleading, as it effaces the overt patriarchal morality which the novel makes a point of endorsing. Ignore it, and the novel magically becomes a feminist tract which Spender is rescuing from patriarchal suppression. She seems to be suggesting that there is no incompatibility between feminist and didacticism.

In fact, there is a good deal of criticism from the “good book if you ignore the didacticism” school. Katharine M. Rogers writes of the women writers of the latter part of the eighteenth century that,

almost all these novels are weakened by insipidity in the central character, because eighteenth century convention demanded that fictional heroines set an example to their sex and that this example be shaped according to the current negative ideal of female virtue (83).

The suggestion here is that didacticism is weak writing: without this necessary nod to “eighteenth century convention,” the book would have been much more sophisticated. Similarly, Janet Todd suggests that women writers had no choice but to appear moral: “Synonymous with sentiment and sensibility, women must write moral didactic or sentimental works suitable, above all, for the perusal of other women” (127). The “must” here suggests that women produced didacticism, against their own will. Aside from this kind of disclaimer, didacticism is rarely mentioned in these studies, treated as a necessary-for-the-time add-on to their fiction which we should not allow to detract us from their covert feminist agenda. By ignoring a major thematic and structural component of these novels, however, such criticism does them a disservice by simplifying the conditions of female writing.

Other critics treat didacticism as a sign of poor writing, and many attempt to downplay its significance. Cheryl Turner, for example, although she approvingly quotes Jane



Spencer's comment that "the underlying assumption that women's writing *must* have a feminist meaning, must in all cases be a gain for feminism, needs to be questioned" still does this very thing by sweeping didacticism right under the carpet:

When women writers reappeared in the novel market after 1744 they did so as the inheritors of Rowe. According to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, "Mrs Rowe, Mrs Carter, Mrs Fielding, Mrs Lennox, Mrs Griffith, Mrs Brooke ... are all sentimental - have all supported the cause of virtue" (1775: vol 45, 536). Although it was still possible, as Charlotte Charke's autobiography demonstrates, for a woman to strengthen her own claim to 'Decency' by condemning earlier female writers and the imprudence 'which too often led 'em into Errors, [which] Reason and Modesty equally forbid' (1755: 12), it became less necessary to propitiate the guardians of public morality by disowning earlier excesses. Indeed, as the century progressed, women writers began to take on the mantle of censor themselves (52).

This statement is less than accurate, however, for in fact the majority of novels by women published after 1775 were didactic: many of the authors she describes were, whether she likes it or not, carefully foregrounding their didacticism; they retained the reactionary approach to other less respectable women writers as a means of propping up their own respectability.

Another critic, Katherine Sobba Green, in a study of what she calls the courtship novel, similarly attempts to find feminist aims in writing which was designed to eschew any hints of female independence and creativity. She argues that late eighteenth century/early nineteenth century women writers were not didactic at all but dealing with the new ideology of "companionate marriage" in which women became "heroines with significant, though modest, prerogatives of choice and action" (2). In fact, these women, according to Green, appropriated "domestic fiction to feminist purposes" (2), and were didactic only incidentally. She notes the role of didacticism last in a list of the ways in which the courtship novel feminised the novel:

Finally, courtship novels were didactic; they theorised overtly on women's conduct - at times replicating the repressive views of male-authored conduct books, and at other times expressing the incipient feminism that had begun to question received roles for women. They exposed threats to women's peace; authoritarian parents, rakish suitors, and even fashionable London. On the two issues of education and marriage, courtship novelists sought to raise women's expectations (13-4).

Green's rhetoric here suggests that in possibly an equal number of occasions, didacticism expressed the "incipient feminism" of women's roles; like Turner, she implies that women writers were better than the name "didactic" implies. Hinting that there was a feminist agenda, she downplays the fact that the majority of women writers producing courtship novels could not put enough emphasis on their desire to promote patriarchal values. Her reading of Mary Brunton, for example, ignores the overtly patriarchal message of her novel in favour of a discussion of Brunton's views on education and on the protagonist, Ellen's "feminist awakening" (128). In this, Green's reading is selective and misrepresentative as she glides over the more difficult aspects of the novel in favour of quoting, out of context, such statements as Ellen's father saying, "It is a confounded pity she is a girl. If she had been of the right sort, she might have got into Parliament, and made a figure with the best of them. But now what use is she?" (122). According to Green, Ellen finally achieves a good education for herself; in fact, however, this education is less in intellect than in learning to be a model domestic woman who prefers a private sexual morality rather than her earlier exhibitionistic self. Green's conclusion is that Brunton offers a new model by relegating patriarchal authority to an extra-marital realm:

If Henry [Ellen's husband-to-be] is necessarily a kind of authority figure in relation to his clan, he is not so in regard to his sister and to Ellen. Hence, while Brunton acknowledges a place for patriarchy, she relegates it altogether to the exterior world, a move that coincidentally parallels John Locke's separation of the domestic from the political scene. By so doing, she obviates an inherent problem for any woman writer, that of finding a denouement for her feminist tale, of allowing both for socially constituted male authority and for a resistant female subject position (133).

So Brunton's novel emerges as a "feminist tale." But the appropriation of a Cinderella-type ending into a feminist agenda skips over some slippery issues. Henry is hardly Ellen's equal, being at least 20 year her senior and wealthy compared to her utter poverty; moreover, it was he who led her into an acceptance of a submissive domestic role. To say that Brunton is "obviating an inherent problem for any women writer" by allowing for both a "socially constituted male authority and for a resistant female subject

position” is a wilful misreading of a plot in which - from the beginning - opposes ideal, inherently natural female domestic morality against unnatural immodesty; the former is rewarded and the latter severely punished. Green’s attempt to ignore the didactic plot in favour of a feminist one both patronises and misrepresents the novel.

Better approaches to the issue of didacticism are found in criticism which takes a more historical approach to the construction of the woman writer. Mary Poovey is more realistic in her reading of early women’s fiction when she notes that women participated in constructing the very literary stereotypes which limited them. By studying the eighteenth century conduct manual and popular magazine she retrieves the ideological notion of the “Proper Lady” who casts a “shadow ... across the careers of some of the women who became professional authors despite the strictures of propriety” (x). Taking account of this female ideal as a result of religious, social and political developments, she describes this idealised notion of femininity as being modest, submissive and sexually restrained. Out of this ideal originated a specific role for the woman writer:

Women writers often simply embraced the social role that women as a group had generally internalised. For the most part, women writers were scrupulous about fulfilling the office of educator, and, as a consequence, their novels often echo conduct books almost verbatim, stressing self-control and self-denial to the exclusion of psychological complexity and attributing almost all initiative to the evil characters rather than to the heroines (38).

Jane Spencer adds to this when she discusses the reception of the woman novelist, noting that in the eighteenth century women writers had to construct themselves as “the proper woman writer” (86) so that they would not appear to be associating themselves with an earlier generation of writers who had been labelled as immoral. To distinguish themselves from such writers, women were careful to outline their special authority:

They were not boldly staking a claim to the field of literature but modestly asking to be allowed to exercise their influence in a special feminine sphere. While on the one hand it was useful for the woman writer not to have to make her writing an attack, on the other this severing of the link between women’s writing and the defence of womanhood had adverse effects on the development of feminist thought in the century (92).

Moreover, Spencer notes that this feminine sphere became repressive: "From Behn to Burney, women novelists discovered a special subject, but became confined to it," ultimately exchanging "the freedom of the outcast for the conformity of the lady" (98). A more useful framework is employed by the critics who attempt to historicise didactic fiction, such as Nancy Armstrong's discussion of the "domestic woman" or Mary Poovey's discussion of the "Proper Lady". In this argument, conduct literature and by extension didactic fiction<sup>53</sup> helped to construct both male and female desire in terms of a private bourgeois sexual morality as opposed to an earlier aristocratic one. The domestic woman posited by this fiction became the object of male economic aspiration.

Although I would challenge Spencer's claim that this repressive didacticism ended with Burney, she is right to point out how the desire for social respectability led to a recurring novelistic structure for women writers. Unfortunately, Spencer can do little more than describe this didacticism - again, it is depicted as being an unfortunate aspect of these novels, not worthy of real critical analysis. The failure of this criticism to come to terms with the didacticism of early women novelists limits our understanding of them and the conditions of their writing. As much as didacticism now seems so distasteful that the only way to get past it is by skipping pious passages, to ignore it is to ignore one of the central aspects of how women constructed their narrative authority for almost a century. Writing by women which claims to have a didactic agenda is simultaneously making an unspoken claim about its literary status as being, paradoxically, unliterary. It was the women novelists themselves who were preoccupied with this distinction much more than their critics, and women novelists who continued to make connections between female writing and sexual immodesty in order to assert their own private respectability. The didactic novel tends to reward female modesty and punish female in chastity. Submerged in this plot structure is the implication that certain kinds of female behaviour - which like "ornamented" literariness - are a form of self exhibitionism. This kind of literary activity, it is implied, is wrong, but novels with a didactic plot claim to belong to a very different category of writing.

## Elizabeth Hamilton

Elizabeth Hamilton is generally mentioned in historical studies as an anti-jacobin writer,<sup>54</sup> a conservative reactionary and sworn enemy of sentimentalism and sensibility. But her anti-jacobin stance is more in the service of defining a didactic female authority than it is in criticising French novels. Her novel, *Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808) is in many ways largely devoted to justifying its own existence through an emphasis on its didactic, non-literary status. What is unusual about the novel, however, is its partial Highland setting: this setting allows Hamilton to appropriate Highlandism in an attempt to make her novel appear to be emerging out of non-fictional, innocently “descriptive” discourse, while at the same time setting out a didactic project of socially-sanctioned “improvement” aimed at the Highlanders.

Recent criticism of Hamilton finds it difficult to account for her didacticism, attempting to insist that it is actually part of a liberal, even feminist, agenda. A recent article by Janice Farrar Thaddeus illustrates this: Thaddeus accurately points out that the jacobin/anti-jacobin division is too oversimplified to account fully for women’s writing, particularly that of Elizabeth Hamilton. She rejects the view of Hamilton as a conservative, however, claiming instead that “Her writing is an amalgam of politics, domesticity, class consciousness, and explicit awareness of women’s subjection” (255) and as such has its own radical agenda. Determined to make a liberal feminist out of Hamilton, she ignores the overt didacticism of Hamilton’s writing and insists instead that the plot recalls Mary Wollstonecraft’s insistence on practical knowledge and reason, in spite of the fact that Hamilton’s *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800-1) was an explicit attack on the kind of feminism embodied by Wollstonecraft. Thaddeus extends this insistence on practical knowledge to the main character of *Cottagers of Glenburnie*,

Mrs Mason changes Glenburnie by convincing the cottagers to adopt the domestic virtues. She introduces ideals of cleanliness, economy, and education. These are not at this period either static concepts or even necessarily conservative ones (273-

4).

One can only imagine what Thaddeus means by what is not “conservative ... at this period” since she seems to have little knowledge of what “this period” is, ignoring most of the relevant historical and literary context in which Hamilton was writing. In her interpretation of the character of Mrs Mason, Thaddeus ignores the fact that Hamilton is constructing the Highlands as lacking in the correct values of domestic femininity which Mrs Mason is there to teach. Any woman displaying ambitions beyond a domestic role is censured harshly. Moreover, Mrs Mason gives rather little “practical” knowledge, providing instead an ongoing stream of conservative moral maxims. Hamilton, like many other women writers of this period, saw herself as an anti-jacobin conservative; to deny this fact involves a wilful misreading of Hamilton’s conservative agenda. A more productive approach is to address the question of how and why Hamilton constructs this conservatism in the first place.

Readings such as Thaddeus’ make the fundamental mistake of taking didactic writing at face value, that is, of interpreting it for the virtues it claims to be teaching rather than as text; such interpretations actually replay the contemporary belief that women’s writing was not in any way creative. In fact, as I will argue here, the didactic narrative voice in these kinds of novels is as much a literary construct as the plot itself and should be read as such. The novel’s rhetorical claim to be not writing is part of the anxiety about inappropriate authorship which many women writers were trying to resolve. What Thaddeus’ study misses is that beneath Hamilton’s overt concern with education is a more fundamental one with writing and respectability.

A more interesting analysis of Hamilton is offered by Gary Kelly, who examines it in political context of the late Eighteenth-century construction of a new “professionalised subject”, detached from the upper classes. This new subject was often associated with the characteristics of “virtue” and “reason”. But Kelly notes that “virtue” and “reason”



held a different meaning for women than it did for men:

Women had at best a problematic relation to this professional middle-class culture of subjectivity. In order to fix their 'domestic' character, women were assigned 'reason' as rote-learning rather than independent critical thought, as domestic order and policing rather than public discourse, while being allowed freer rein in domains of 'fancy' and 'imagination', in 'light', 'ornamental', 'entertaining' and domestically useful discourses of 'taste' that could add an inflection of gentility to middle class private life (7).

Thus women writers tended to define their writing in much different terms, avoiding overt association with the political sphere. Although socially useful, women's writing did not claim to teach the same kind of critical skills as writing by men, but rather continued to reinforce lessons of order and cleanliness. In particular, women took on the task of spreading gentility far and wide:

Women were to preside over the first arena of socialization by nurturing sympathy in the family members, thus preparing them to withstand the competitive pressures of the public sphere. Also 'repairing individuals or groups unsuccessful in social competition, such as the poor ... (8).

Hamilton's *Cottagers of Glenburnie* takes the improvement of the Highlands as its object, addressing itself to teaching the poorer, uneducated classes a new social usefulness and refinement.

Upon close examination, Hamilton's preoccupation with defining her writing in terms of female respectability leads to an odd circularity in the plot. Her preoccupation with maintaining respectability leads her to use a variety of rhetorical strategies to distance herself from the possible charge of inappropriate authority. Like many didactic women writers, Hamilton enforces a distinction between public and private morality in women, in which women who enter the public sphere willingly are punished for inappropriate, self-exhibitionistic behaviour. But this distinction risks reflecting back on Elizabeth Hamilton, a woman who has herself clearly committed a public act in publishing *Cottagers*. To counteract this potential hypocrisy - that she is doing the same thing she is criticising other women for doing - she uses a variety of strategies for backgrounding the

literariness of her own text, and foregrounding the literariness of others. One such strategy is by appropriating the discourse of Highland ethnography to appear to be only describing, not “writing,” about the failure of domestic morality, at the same time as she quietly advertises the need for didacticism in the form of the kind of teaching in the form offered by her own novel.

The first part of the novel is constructed along the lines of the contemporary didactic novel in the style of Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Inchbald. As such, it cannot emphasise enough the division it is endorsing between public and private female morality, a division embodied between two sisters, Mary and Bell Stewart. Mary adheres to a modest dress code and a conservative femininity associated with private domestic morality; Bell, on the other hand, has been given the wrong kind of education at a girls’ school, that ““nursery of folly and impertinence, where she learned nothing but vanity and idleness”” (2), and where she had “acquired such a love of dress, and so many foolish notions about gentility, as have utterly destroyed all relish for domestic happiness” (14). The dangerous ambitions she has acquired here lead her to make a near-disastrous marriage in an attempt to move above her “station” in life. Hamilton’s narrative implies that Mary’s is natural female behaviour, nudged along by the right kind of education, while Bell’s outlook is learned and artificial. An older woman, Mrs Mason, arrives at the Stewart house, and further emphasises the importance of female domesticity: although Thaddeus sees Mrs Mason as a feminist symbol because she is an unmarried, independent figure, in fact she is the voice of patriarchy, teaching the girls the very ideology Thaddeus claims she is transcending.

When Mrs Mason arrives at the house, the reaction of the two sisters is telling: Mary “offered her assistance to support her to her room, and conducted her to it with all that respectful kindness which age or indisposition so naturally excites in an artless mind” (1). “Artlessness” here signifies the absence of the wrong kind of education, although at the same time, the novel rather problematically implies that “artlessness” is a kind of

behaviour “learned” under the right circumstances. Bell, on the other hand, makes a show of being disgusted at Mrs Mason’s lack of glamour and refuses to receive her politely into the house; she criticises Mary for keeping “company with a servant,” although Mrs Mason shares the same origins as Bell’s own parents (1). Her snobbery is part of the novel’s conservative ideology: with rather little subtlety, the narrative voice mocks Bell’s inappropriate aspirations, leaving the reader with no choice but to accept the “good sense” promoted by Mrs Mason.

This less-than-subtle didacticism is part of the novel’s construction of authority. The narrative voice is located as that of the author persona, “Elizabeth Hamilton,” who asserts her literary respectability by foregrounding her didactic project throughout the novel. In fact, this author persona attempts to make it clear that the plot is little more than a vehicle for teaching private morality and domesticity to girls in the tradition of conduct manuals: chapters are given content-related subheadings, as if for easy reference, such as “Hints on Gardening,” “Containing a useful prescription” and “Hints concerning the duties of a schoolmaster.” The author persona even occasionally enters the novel to draw any moral conclusions that the reader might have missed, further underlining the “goal” of didactic teaching. This “Elizabeth Hamilton,” a dedicated reformer of female behaviour, effaces the real Elizabeth Hamilton with real literary anxieties hiding behind her didacticism.<sup>55</sup>

That the didactic division between public and private female morality is an implicit statement about how Hamilton wants to construct her writing is evidenced in her comments about another category of women writers who destroy the natural domesticity of the younger generation. The contrast between Bell and Mary extends to Bell’s reading material. Where Mary admires Mrs Mason, Bell has fallen under the influence of a very different kind of woman, a “Mrs Flinders” who provides her with not just the wrong role model, but, more disturbingly, the wrong reading material as well. The novels supplied by Mrs Flinders, clearly distinguished from the kind of novel *Cottagers* claims to be, are

criticised for being in part responsible for Bell's inability to appreciate "domestic happiness." Novel reading dulls her interest in the real world: several dogs, or, in Bell's overwrought language, some "vile little terrier puppies" come in to her bedroom and chew up her cap while she is caught up in a novel:

I had only lain down upon my bed to read a novel I got from Mrs Flinders, when I heard the nasty things come into the room; but I could not be at the trouble to put them out, I was so interested in the book ...Wouf, wouf! Cried the other; but I still read on, till I was so much affected by the story, that I was obliged to get up to look for my pocket-handkerchief (3.1).

Bell is foolishly constructing herself as the heroine of a novel of sensibility, where self-indulgent "affectation," or excessive feeling displaces her ability to act in the real world. Her naïve identification with these books implicitly suggests that reading this kind of fiction teaches false sensibility: there is a stagy self-awareness about Bell's needing to "get up and look for my pocket-handkerchief." Unlike the didactic novel, the sentimental novel is conceived as being full of dangers to girls who lose touch with the real world of pressing domestic concerns, transforming young people into self-indulgent fools, incapable of action.

Mrs Mason, on the other hand, reflects the didactic purposes of the good woman writer. Her discourse is closely aligned with that of "Elizabeth Hamilton" who steps in at regular intervals to point out the need for positive didactic models. There is an unspoken advertisement for didactic writing in Mrs Mason's criticism of sentimental novels: "Love is, in the creed of sentiment, and of plays, and novels, a sufficient excuse for the breach of every duty, both before marriage and after it" (33.2). Sentimental writing is depicted as being the root of all evil, corrupting the bonds of society by teaching women to ignore their "duty." Bell is just a beginner in this tradition of neglect of duty, saved in time by Mrs Mason's good sense. Although critics like Butler are right to see Hamilton as an anti-jacobin, at the same time, she is using the discourse of anti-jacobinism in the service of her didacticism: Mrs Mason, with her warnings, lessons and moral maxims, is an image of the author persona "Elizabeth Hamilton," a woman who never strays from

her didactic duty and who teaches important lessons to those around her. In this way, didacticism becomes a perfect justification for itself, modestly claiming to be the very protector of society's most important value system.

The contrast between public and private morality structures the first part of the novel: but the second part depends on a different, if related, discourse. After a life of modesty and prudence, Mrs Mason is on her way to Glenburnie, where she has one remaining family member, a woman named Mrs MacClarty. After her visit to the Stewarts, she travels with Mary to the Highlands. The Highlands become a source of didactic authority in an alternative way, very unlike Grant's earlier construction. As an anti-jacobin, Hamilton rejects the valorisation of primitive simplicity, with its roots apparently in the mentality which led to the French revolution.

A new set of social problems is addressed to give the novel a new *raison d'être*. Looking at the Highlands in terms of the laziness and lack of domestic pride of its inhabitants gives Hamilton the opportunity to start emphasising the need for improvement by apparently only "describing" the Highlands in discourses which range from landscape description to ethnography. The discourses associated with the Highland settings allows Hamilton to exploit the kind of ethnographic authority popularised by Samuel Johnson while still retaining didacticism as her justification for writing in the first place. Behind these would-be innocently-descriptive discourses is the novel's didactic, "improving" agenda, a series of "hints" given to make the Highlands more domestic. With this improving agenda, Hamilton constructs the practicality of her own writing.

As they approach the Glen, the overt didacticism of the first part of the novel changes into a different kind of ethnographic didacticism. The travellers have a positive response to the scenery:

Mrs Mason and Mary were so enchanted by the change of scenery which was incessantly unfolding to their view, that they made no complaints of the slowness

of their progress, nor did they much regret being obliged to stop a few minutes at a time, where they found so much to amuse and to delight them (13).

Also this passage begins as if it may be a description of the landscape, it is really more a description of the traveller's feelings. Positive and unaffected feelings abound, as if Mary and Mrs Mason are part of the "aesthetic community" described by Cole and Schwartz, drawing on an apparently natural set of landscape-appreciating feelings which appears to pre-exist the discourse in which they are spoken.

Hamilton's descriptions of the landscape have a habit of reflecting back on the writer's apparent "artlessness." But what begins as description is soon turned back into didacticism as it emerges that the Highlands are sorely in need of Mrs Mason's domestic skills. As she and Mary approach Glenburnie, the discourse of travel writing/landscape aesthetic is transformed into an opposition between (primitive) chaos and (domestic) order:

They had not proceeded many paces until they were struck with admiration at the uncommon wildness of the scene which now opened to their view. The rocks which seemed to guard the entrance of the Glen were abrupt and savage, and approached so near each other, that one could suppose them to have been riven asunder to give a passage to the clear stream which flowed between them (14).

Descriptive language such as "uncommon wildness" and "rocks ... were abrupt and savage" combine both landscape aesthetics and primitivism. But at the same time there is a subtle contrast between the "wildness" of the Highlands and the "clear stream" which seems to cause this wildness to recede: Mrs Mason, like the clear stream of anti-jacobin rationality, seems to be bringing calm and order to a savage landscape.

And this is only the beginning: Hamilton's didacticism is unrelenting. The descriptions of the Highlands invariably lead back to the same moral: the need for domestic improvement that can be furthered by Hamilton's novel. When a river appears in the landscape before the travellers, the narrative voice of "Elizabeth Hamilton" turns it into a strained metaphor for the relationship between children and parents. Making a general



statement about the nature of rivers of “running out of the straight line,” the author persona jumps in to remark,

But however they may in this resemble the moral conduct of man, it is but doing justice to these favourite children of nature, to observe, that, in all their wanderings, each stream follows the strict injunction of its parent, and never for a moment loses its original character. That our burn had a character of its own, no one who saw its spirited career could possibly have denied. It did not, like the lazy and luxuriant streams, which glide through the fertile valleys of the south, turn and wind in listless apathy, as if it had no other object than the gratification of ennui or caprice. Alert, and impetuous, and persevering, it even from its infancy dashed onward, proud and resolute; and no sooner met with a rebuff from the rocks on one side of the Glen, than it flew indignant to the other, frequently awaking the sleeping echoes by the noise of its wild career (14).

Description of the landscape of the Highlands turns into a dissertation on the need for good guidance, and a further justification for novel writing. On one level, this metaphor warns against the “laziness,” “luxuriance” and “gratification of ennui or caprice” which is supposed to come from sentimental reading. On another level, however, this metaphor also points to its own didacticism: the discourse of landscape aesthetics applied to the Highlands is appropriated here to appear to demonstrate the importance of filial piety.

Hamilton’s preoccupation with avoiding charges of literariness emerge in other ways. The novel uses a variety of techniques to shift narrative responsibility away from “Elizabeth Hamilton.” One of these techniques is for different characters to agree with the narrative outlook, a rhetorical trick to prevent “Elizabeth Hamilton” from appearing to be “writing.” Criticism of the Highlands come from a variety of different sources. The leisure to stop and appreciate the views is clearly a function of Highland laxity: the inhabitants of Glenburnie “canna be fashed” to improve the road so the progress is slow and arduous:

The road, which winded along the foot of the hills, on the north side of the glen, owed as little to art as any country road in the kingdom. It was very narrow, and much encumbered by loose stones, brought down from the hills above by the winter torrents (15).

Mary’s father exclaims, “How little trouble would it cost ... to throw the smaller of

these loose stones into these holes and ruts ... There are enough of idle boys in the Glen to effect all this, by working at it for one hour a-week during the summer” (14). Mrs Mason does not make such overt criticism, but Mr Stewart’s comments: the youngsters of Glenburnie, with no good moral guidance, cannot be asked to do any work. The results of such a tradition of laziness abound: presently they come across an overturned cart in which the driver and horse narrowly escaped with their lives.

The travellers’ commentary is turned into a justification of Hamilton’s claimed project of calling for improvement of the Highlands as Mrs Mason arrives in Glenburnie. The house owned by the MacClarty family, in which Mrs Mason is going to reside for three months, is filthy and the descriptions of it were found by reviewers to be Hamilton’s best writing: at any rate, there is a sense of narrative energy in the passages which depict Mrs MacClarty’s domestic failures, perhaps because they are what Hamilton feels are the least problematic to describe. This narrative voice, speaking from Mrs Mason’s perspective, is apparently doing little more than describing the house. But beneath this “innocent” description is a statement about Hamilton’s own narrative authority. The description of Mrs MacClarty begins by recalling comments by earlier travellers: she is commended for her speaking “with great simplicity,” but then becomes an object of criticism for her lack of domestic pride. Looking around the MacClarty house, Mrs Mason notices the furnishings, including the contents of a dresser:

These, though arranged with apparent care, did not entirely conceal from view the dirty night-caps and other articles that were stuffed in behind ... The portable furniture, as chairs, tables, &c were all, though clumsy, of good material; so that Mrs Mason thought the place wanted nothing but a little attention to neatness, and some more to light, to render it tolerably comfortable (16).

Again this passage seems to be in sanctioned ethnographic discourse: it describes the odd character of Highland homes and is included in a chapter entitled “A peep behind the curtain--hints on gardening.” The objective tone suggests that it is not “Elizabeth Hamilton” who is making these comments so much as an impersonal, unquestionable authority; “evidence” of this nature is constantly given to support what appears to be the

desperate need for a didactic novel.

The description of Mrs MacClarty's home also converts an "ethnographic" commentary on Highland cultural heritage into a didactic one. In tones of apparently objective historical description, the author persona writes:

Some learned authors have indeed adduced this propensity in support of the theory which teaches, that mankind originally walked upon all fours, and that standing erect is an outrage on the laws of nature; while others, willing to trace it to a more honourable source, contend, that, as the propensity evidently prevails chiefly among those who are conscious of being able to transmit the colour of their hands to the objects on which they place them, it is decidedly an impulse of genius, and, in all probability, derived from our Pictish ancestors, whose passion for painting is well-known to have been great and universal (17).

The criticism of the "theory" of natural behaviour comes out of Hamilton's anti-jacobin stance; yet this too is converted into a commentary on the importance of cleanliness and domestic pride. Cultural history is here depicted as little more than an excuse for laziness and slovenliness, as Hamilton's mock grandeur further defines the central issue as being not the charm of primitive origins but the importance of bourgeois domesticity.

The educational "good sense" which the novel claims to be promoting over and against the "creed of sentimentalism" has its roots in conservative ideology: the novel's plot, like its narrative discourse, uses the Highlands to affirm Hamilton's authority. Mrs MacClarty is, however loving, an indulgent mother who has failed to discipline her children. One boy runs off and - after a series of mishandled events - becomes the indirect cause of Mr MacClarty's death. As the family begins to deteriorate, Mrs Mason tries to teach the MacClarty children some of her own domestic skills. But even though they are a lost cause, "Elizabeth Hamilton" makes it clear that domestic values can triumph: Mrs Mason teaches others in the community the value of domestic pride, setting up a local school which soon gains a good reputation. But the seemingly objective ethnographic discourse reveals its class bias in a description of Mrs Mason's successful school: "To have been educated at the school of Glenburnie was considered

as an ample recommendation to a servant, and implied a security for truth, diligence and honesty" (45). In spite of the novel's apparent modesty, this is a big claim to be making about the use-value of the Highlands, as a breeding ground for good domestic servants. The real agenda behind lampooning Bell's aspirations becomes clear as the novel's ideological roots are revealed to be in a relegation of the Highlands to a lower-class status.

Hamilton's preoccupation with shifting narrative responsibility elsewhere is revealed in an "Appendix" added on to the text after the novel itself is finished. Containing an extract from an anonymously-written letter addressed "to the Author of THE COTTAGERS OF GLENBURNIE," this passage appears to lend the kind of external authority to Hamilton's novel that was lacking in Grant's *Letters*. The letter "confirms" the description of the MacClarty family given by "Elizabeth Hamilton." The goal of the letter is to fill in the end of the story of Mrs MacClarty, who "some years ago married a cousin of her own, and that they keep a well-known inn on the ---- road" (45). This letter, by addressing the same author persona that claims to be writing the story in the first place, seems to confirm the non-fictional nature of the text: once again, "Elizabeth Hamilton" is rhetorically protected from taking narrative responsibility.

Even the letter-writer resists narrative responsibility, by claiming to be using the same descriptive discourse as the novel. Its goal claims to be to generate action in the real world by giving an accurate, verifiable description of Mrs MacClarty's bad housekeeping:

As their circumstances are, I fear, in a declining state, and as it may be in your power to avert their utter ruin, by inducing travellers to give a preference to their house, at which none, alas! Now stop but from dire necessity, I shall be at pains to furnish you with such an exact description of it, as cannot fail to be instantly recognised (45).

The desire to give an "exact" description is part of a strategy of confirming the "good sense" spoken through the novel. This letter seems to give credibility to "Elizabeth

Hamilton” as the “letter writer” describes Mrs MacClarty’s Inn with apparently innocent naïveté:

I shall ... conduct you into the passage, the walls of which seem to have been painted at the time the colour called *Paris mud* was so much in fashion. The pavement and the stairs have a still blacker groundwork, over which lies a coat of sand, which answer the purpose of a register, and enables them to measure the size of every foot that treads the carpets of the adjoining rooms ... (45).

The letter constructs the whole narrative process as using little authorial manipulation, proving its point as if mainly through description. Where the author persona could not foreground her didacticism enough in the first part of the novel, in the second part the necessity for her didactic novel is justified by what appears to be an external authority.

Hamilton’s novel is in many ways little more than an extended justification for itself which exploits the contemporary interest in the Highlands by constructing a community desperately in need of her novel. But however problematic a use of Highland culture this is, it emerges out of a negative attitude towards female writing which Hamilton’s own novel helps to perpetuate. And in fact, most of Hamilton’s contemporary reviewers, like many of her more recent critics, took her literary claims at face value, congratulating the usefulness of her novel rather than any literary skill on her part. The *Edinburgh Review* compared her to Maria Edgeworth, praising “the practical good sense of the lessons which they convey,” even suggesting - without a hint of irony - that Hamilton arrange to have it printed on “coarse paper” so that peasants could afford to buy it.<sup>56</sup> Edgeworth herself also praised *Cottagers*, describing its “satire” as “benevolent - its object is to mend, not wound the heart.”<sup>57</sup> The *Critical Review* finds it extremely “accurate” and revels to think of how “some Scots must blush to read it.”<sup>58</sup> As well as its educational value, *Cottagers* was also congratulated in rather standard language on its truthfulness and ability to give a sense of the “national character,” however unlikely a depiction it may seem now: Scottish cultural difference is given in “admirable pictures” which avoids “effect by the broad glare of exaggeration” (403); Edgeworth likewise calls it “a faithful representation of ... local manners and customs” (623). These reviews do not

address the novel's fictionality, suggesting that the benefit of Hamilton's narrative is her accurate description of the world, with an eye to improving it. Moreover, they also accept that the novel is a product of, and will itself produce positive sensibility. The *Critical Review* describes "the pleasure of a careful perusal" (421); the *Monthly Review* uses similar rhetoric, pointing out how much "pleasure as the whole tale will inevitably yield,"<sup>59</sup> while Edgeworth commends their "cheerfulness" (623). Although such reviews seem to be both repetitive and uncritical, they reflect the criteria women were applying to themselves and to each other: the more overt didacticism in a novel, the more talent the woman was felt to have; the more positive feeling she was claimed to produce, the more she was putting her good didactic authority to work. By constantly reaffirming the standards on which a woman writer's authority was based as educational, right feeling and domestic, then, women writers often performed their own self-censorship, criticising as inappropriate any female writing which did not claim to be didactic. Women writers and reviewers created a rigid, self-perpetuating mutual appreciation society, a female authority which existed by virtue of its relentless attacks on dangerous "sentimental" writing.

But while many reviewers accepted Hamilton's stated goals, others did not. In the *Annual Review*, one critic whose response is equivocal, begins his or her review by asking, "Why are we to be constantly pestered about the depraved taste of the age displayed in the general fondness for novel reading?"<sup>60</sup> Arguing that while there may be a few people who display such depraved taste, in general, "A bad novel was never known to retain its popularity long" and excessive warnings against bad reading are not entirely necessary (608). There is apparently no way to find fault with the novel on a didactic level, and the review points to the general circle of approval with a slight tone of sarcasm: "The matron recommends it to her daughter, and the daughter feels a higher confidence in the matron's judgement" (608). There is apparently agreement all around, except that the novel is founded on a rather unlikely premise, and that it is moreover occasionally "very dull" and may not, in the end, have that much effect. Like the *Critical Review*'s response



to Grant's *Letters* which she found so disturbing, this review also ignores Hamilton's claims to didactic authority, focusing instead on the issue of literary quality, and, as with Grant, found her novel wanting.

Interestingly, there is another subtle critique of Hamilton from Anne Grant herself. In 1819, after reading the copy of Hamilton's *Essays on the Improvement of the Understanding, the Imagination, and the Heart* which Hamilton sent her, she confesses in a letter that although she dutifully found these essays "excellent," she also felt they were preaching to the converted without paying much attention to literary pleasure: "I only regret that there is not more attraction in the style. Good books are generally read most by those who least need them: one could wish that there were some charms in the diction of so valuable a treatise" (31). Woven in to this muted praise is the sense that this kind of female narrative authority has almost become too easy, a prescription for publication which is ultimately of limited social value. In questioning the lack of "charms" of Hamilton's style, Grant points to a potential discomfort with the circularity of didacticism, written, read and commended by the same people. Grant, however, seems almost entirely unaware that this charge could equally be levelled at her own writing.

## Mary Brunton

Another possible response to Hamilton is found seven years later, in a novel which bears many similarities to *Cottagers*. Mary Brunton's *Discipline* is, like *Cottagers*, a didactic novel whose action is set partly in the Highlands<sup>61</sup>. Like Hamilton, Brunton is wrestling with many of the same problems of defining herself against imagined threats of inappropriate authority: her strategies for constructing her authority recall those of Hamilton, including an uncompromising attitude towards what is depicted as female self-exhibitionism, the promotion of virtues of modesty and prudence, and a narrative discourse which censures any female transgressions. But Brunton uses the Highlands for this project differently than Hamilton does. Rather than constructing an author persona

who claims to be “improving” it, Brunton’s author persona claims to be explaining and preserving its cultural authenticity. The discourse of improvement articulated by Hamilton, in fact, becomes a target in Brunton’s novel, an apparently simple discourse which is shown to have potentially destructive consequences.

Both novelists are making claims to be part of the “real world,” verifiable by the reader. But where Hamilton attempts to hide her “novelness” behind an author persona who is constantly driving home didactic lessons, *Discipline* is, in spite of the title, somewhat more subtle in its use of didacticism. Narrated by one of its characters, it is not feasible for the author’s persona to enter the text to point out its didactic lessons; but more significantly, Brunton does not “sacrifice” the Highlands to her discourse of didacticism in the same way as Hamilton does. For Brunton, much - but not everything - is turned into didacticism, and one of the things that is not is Highland culture. Where Hamilton turned landscape aesthetics and ethnography into improving didacticism, Brunton rejects this kind of improvement and turns it instead into a different kind of authority based on experiential knowledge.

Like Hamilton’s novel, Brunton’s begins with an opposition between public and private morality, into which is built a defence of her narrative authority which permits itself to run into some of the same difficulties as did Grant. Brunton, who knew Grant’s work well, borrows some of her rhetoric. By focusing on issues of truth and didactic motivation, Grant hoped to distance herself from possible charges of inappropriate authority. But rhetorically, her success in defending herself was limited to a circular argument about writing: the “truth” of her text is evidence in the text itself, and any good reader should realise this; moreover, the cynical reader is only proving his or her “inferiority.” Like Grant, Brunton charges the disbelieving reader with excessive cynicism and insists that her own motivation is didactic. But at the same time she faces the problem of female authority from a different angle and offers a different “solution” than either Grant or Brunton.

*Discipline* opens with an address to the problematic nature of female authority in the words of the main character, Ellen Percy, the novel's narrator. While these comments are in many ways the typical insistence on literary modesty, at the same time, they take some account of the circular logic in which many women writers found themselves stuck. Ellen claims that she has heard it said that the autobiographer should possess Irish humour, Scotch prudence and English sincerity: the humour to make it readable, the prudence to protect the author and the sincerity,

... that the perusal of it may be profitable to others. I might, perhaps, with truth declare, that I possess only the last of these qualifications. But, besides that my readers will probably take the liberty of estimating for themselves my merits as a narrator, I suspect, that professions of humility may possibly deceive the professor himself; and that, while I am honestly confessing my disqualifications, I may be secretly indemnifying my pride, by glorying in the candour of my confession. Any expression of self-abasement might, indeed, appear peculiarly misplaced as a preface to whole volumes of egotism; the world being generally uncharitable enough to believe, that vanity may somewhat influence him who chooses himself for his theme. Nor can I be certain that this charge is wholly inapplicable to me; since it is notorious to common observation, that, rather than forego their darling subject, the vain will expatiate even on their errors (1).

Her claim to "humility" is that she is not using ornament ("Irish humour") to make a good tale: that is, her writing is not a public act, but labour undertaken for the benefit of others. But by even making such a claim she notes she is risking a certain charge of "pride" - a mantle of false humility which could be just as easily interpreted as a desire to exhibit herself in print. In other words, there is an anxiety not just of inappropriate authority here but also of appearing hypocritical: that she could be using literariness to efface literariness, taking on a false humility ("expatiating" her "errors") to avert suspicion. Although she is not trying to defend the "truth" of her narrative in the style of Grant, she is raising the same issue of the difficulty of "proving" the right kind of literary motivation. Proclaiming herself to be writing primarily in the interests of didacticism, of being "profitable to others," she points out at the same time the fundamental circularity of such a claim, as readers will "take the liberty of estimating for themselves" her abilities as a narrator and her motivation in writing.

Haunted, then, by the same cynical reader who haunts Grant's text, Brunton addresses the problems associated with the authority women writers claim for themselves. Rather than Grant's circular argument, however, Brunton at least faces up to the problem of this circularity: that it exists largely in the reader's willingness to grant it. As we saw in the reviews of Hamilton's novel, there was a community of favourable readers, who willingly accepted this authority. Brunton is as entrapped in this problem as the next writer and ultimately cannot argue herself out of it. She can only revert to the same claim as other writers, of insisting on a didactic motivation which she cannot prove:

A better motive, however, mingles with those which impel me to relate my story. It is no unworthy feeling which leads such as are indebted beyond return, to tell of the benefits they have received; or which prompts one who has escaped from eminent peril, to warn others of the danger of their way (12).

Although the narrator makes this claim of didactic intent, it is further problematised by the fact that it is a claim being made by a fictional character, not someone who has potentially lived through this experience in the real world. The claim itself is potentially hypocritical, a claim of humility worried about seeming false which is itself a fiction. But although Brunton seems to be trapping herself in the same circular logic as did Grant, she will later counterbalance this problem of a circular, internal logic to the text with the use of Highland-associated discourses in a very different way from Hamilton.

Brunton begins her novel by enacting the same contrast between private and public morality as is found in *Cottagers*. As with Hamilton, this is a means of enforcing her own literary respectability by criticising "public" or exhibitionistic women, as if to make the point that she is no such woman herself. Ellen Percy's recollection of her past exploits are narrated in a modest, delicate tone which not only makes it clear that she has reformed, but also congratulates female modesty in general. The first part of the novel is structured around a contrast between two characters like Mary and Bell: Juliet Arnold and Elizabeth Mortimer. Miss Mortimer is characterised by her "simplicity" - a word which in this case reflects the absence of artificially learned behaviour, and which will

also come to characterise the Highlands. She eschews self-exhibition, cultivating instead a private literary respectability. Ellen describes Miss Mortimer, faintly mocking her own earlier disgust with what appeared at the time to be excessively prudish behaviour:

... Miss Mortimer displayed a practical conviction, that grey hairs ought to be covered with a cap; and that a neck of five-and-forty is the better for a handkerchief; she attended church regularly; was seldom seen in a public place; and, above all, was said to have the preposterous customs of condescending to join her own servants in daily prayer (20).

Miss Mortimer is not only a model of private morality, “seldom seen in a public place,” but is also dedicated to the education of female morals. She promotes private morality in others, saying to Ellen who is about to go out to a party inappropriately dressed:

‘it is a good principle in dress, that the chief use of clothing is concealment. I am persuaded, that you would never offend in this point, were you to remember, that if ever an exposed figure pleases, it must be in some way in which no modest woman would wish to please’ (89).

This kind of pleasure recalls the dangerous pleasures of female “dazzle” described by Anne Grant, which she opposes to her own concept of “simple pleasures.” Miss Mortimer’s simplicity makes her into an ideal woman. When she was younger, Ellen found Miss Mortimer’s “simplicity ... perverse” (21), but her attitude soon changes as she realises the dangers of not being “simple.” Simplicity is also a quality desired by the right man: where the effeminate Lord Frederick encourages Ellen’s exhibitionistic behaviour, the novel’s hero, a Highland laird in disguise, adores “simplicity,” saying “with a sigh,” “What a pleasing woman is Miss Mortimer! That feminine simplicity and sweetness make the merest commonplace delightful!” (33). The “simple pleasure” referred to here is a rebuke to Ellen, who will go on to aspire to “that feminine simplicity” desired by Mr Maitland. As with Anne Grant, feminine simplicity is associated with the rejection of any kind of self-exhibitionism, either literary or in dress.

Simplicity has its antagonistic counterpart in Ellen’s friend, Juliet Arnold, who displays the same kind of self-promoting exhibitionism as Bell in *Cottagers*. In the descriptions of Juliet, it is clear that the wrong kind of education once again leads to a deterioration in

society's moral fabric:

Let no simple reader, trained by an antiquated grandmother in the country, imagine my meaning to be that Miss Arnold was practised in the domestic, the economical, the submissive virtues; that she was skilled in excusing frailty, enlivening solitude, or scattering sunshine upon the passing clouds of life!--I only mean that Miss Arnold was taught accomplishments which were deemed likely to attract notice and admiration; that she knew what to withdraw from the view, and what to prepare for exhibition (16).

Addressing members of her audience as "simple reader" is a means of foregrounding the novel's educational content. In a playfully ironic tone, the reader is constructed as naïve and literal-minded, characterised by a "simplicity" which precludes any understanding of the novel's "literariness," however modest this "literariness" is pretending to be. The distinction being set out here, between a reader who does not understand the concept of exhibitionism (be it literary or reflected in female behaviour) and the likes of Juliet Arnold, deflects the charge of public female morality towards easy targets.

As in *Cottagers*, however, *Discipline* only depends upon this overt strategy until the action removes to the Highlands. Also, as in *Cottagers*, the Highlands are invoked as a means of constructing an author persona who can account for the apparent discrepancy between claims to be promoting modesty and the public act of novel writing. But where the author persona of *Cottagers* defines her authority by claiming to be "improving" the Highlands, in *Discipline*, the agenda of the author persona is different. When Ellen's adventures take her to Edinburgh, she befriends a young Highland woman named Cecil Graham, whose unusual behaviour attracts Ellen's interest. Locating the action first in Edinburgh and then in the Highlands, Brunton describes odd cultural rites in order to be able to enter her text to explain them in the guise of a "Mary Brunton." At the same time as she "explains" Highland culture, she distances herself from inappropriate "writing" in another way: the distinction between "simplicity" and "dazzle" is transposed onto a new distinction between discourse and her own real "experiential" authority, in other words, the same opposition as Grant's "water-colours or fiction" vs. "the durable pencil of truth."



Like Mrs MacClarty in *Cottagers*, Cecil is sorely lacking in domestic skills, but it becomes a reflection on Ellen's enlarged understanding that this is ultimately of less interest than her cultural heritage:

When I had a little conquered by disgust at the filth and disorder of her dwelling, I found my visits there as amusing as many of more 'pomp and circumstance.' She was to me an entirely new specimen of human character; an odd mixture of good sense and superstition, -- of minute parsimony and liberal kindness, -- of shrewd observation, and a kind of romantic abstraction from sensible objects (245-6).

Having established her own domestic credentials by expressing "disgust," Ellen's didacticism is transformed into a different kind of discourse, which focuses on Cecil as a national type, an "entirely new specimen of human character", rather than a didactic project. Unlike Mrs Mason whose disgust at the "filth and disorder" of Mrs MacClarty's house affirms the "improving" didacticism of the novel, in *Discipline*, didacticism is displaced by a new discourse in which the activity of writing claims to have a different goal.

Ellen's role as narrator goes from being the voice of private morality to the voice of semi-detached interest and amateur ethnography which allows the author persona to demonstrate her experiential authority. Her own comments on the Highlands are supplemented by a special knowledge of the essence of "the Highlander." Thus when Ellen meets Cecil, Cecil says of her son, "This one is a stout lad-bairn - God save him\*." An asterisk leads down to a footnotes which explains,

No Highlander praises any living creature without adding this benediction. ... To be vain of a possession is justly considered as provoking Heaven to withdraw it, or to make it an instrument of punishment; and no true Highlander ever expected comfort in which had been envied or greedily desired by another. Upon the same account, it is not judged polite to ask, nor safe to tell the number of a flock, or of a family. I once asked a countrywoman the number of a fine brood of chickens. "They're as many as were gi'en," said she; "I'm sure I never counted them" (237).

This footnote seems to be providing supplementary descriptive information on the

typologised “Highlander,” which slides almost imperceptibly from an objective, omniscient voice into a subjective one, the “I” of an author persona who becomes the knowledgeable “Mary Brunton” of the text. But its ethnographic tone is deceptive, as at the same time the “I” of the footnotes makes two subtle claims here which construct her experiential authority: that there is a such thing as a “true Highlander” - distinguished at some unspoken level from an inauthentic one - and that this editorial voice has first-hand knowledge of what a “true” Highlander is. As Cecil and her cultural heritage take up an increasingly larger amount of space in the novel, with little relation to its ostensible plot, a series of footnotes give more of this “background” information on “the Highlanders.” Who is the speaker of these footnotes? As there is an “Elizabeth Hamilton” in *Cottagers* who enters her text to make a subtle justification for her act of public authorship, so is there the authorial persona of “Mary Brunton” who emerges in the footnotes and who likewise seeks to construct her own act of “writing” as rooted in the authority of real experience.

Brunton’s footnotes are a more sophisticated technique for controlling the appearance of her feminine authority while at the same time appearing not to: although these footnotes appear to be simple anecdotal descriptions, they play several key functions in the text. Where Elizabeth Hamilton added an “Appendix” to her novel in which an unnamed writer appeared to “confirm” her comments, Brunton’s footnotes take this one step further by giving actual intertextual references. They also help to efface the fictionality of the text by establishing its origins in the author persona’s real experience. And finally, they give an implicit motivation for undertaking a public act of authorship in the first place: the preservation of the “real” Highlands from what has been constructed by “fashionable” discourse. The “simple reader” is distinguished from Juliet Arnold and her kind: here the footnotes distinguish serious ethnographic interest from fashionable and potentially destructive concerns.

Moreover, this new ethnographic discourse allows Brunton apparently to “solve” the

problem of female authority by replacing the old set of criteria with a new one. Ellen Percy began the novel confronting the problem of how to establish *real* didactic literary motivation; but with the focus on the Highlands, literary motivation slides rhetorically into a different issue. By displacing her didactic authority with an ethnographic one, Brunton also displaces didactic motivation with the new criteria of proving experiential knowledge. By appearing to “prove” that her writing has its origins in real experience rather than in popular writing for tourists, she simultaneously appears to prove its “simplicity” and non-fictional status.

Brunton refers to other “authoritative” texts in her footnotes as if to give evidence that her novel is based on “the durable pencil of truth” rather than the “water-colours of fiction,” as if these texts did not originate from the same discourses as her own. She invokes several respectable, male-authored texts in her footnotes as if to demonstrate not just that her own narrative is based on fact, not fiction, but also that there is external evidence to “prove” what she is saying. For example, when Cecil Graham tells Ellen the story of cattle stealing, a footnote establishes the historical accuracy of this story with an extended quotation from *Graham’s Sketches of Perthshire* (247-8). Later, when travelling with the patriotic Charlotte Graham to her Highland home, Glen Eredine, Charlotte exclaims, “Ah, stay till you see the parks of Eredine!” A footnote directs the reader to a long quotation from *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London* (341) in which a similar scene is recalled as if to “prove” that the source material is not based in imagination. These intertextual references have little to do with the novel’s plot; instead, their role is to define an authorial responsibility.

Perhaps the most telling intertextual reference is to Anne Grant herself. Cecil Graham, recalling the dancing at her unhappy wedding, likens her mood to that of a “‘lykwake’.” A footnote explains that this is a reference to an old Highland custom of a “‘latewake,’” or “‘watching a corpse before interment,’” at which mourners occasionally danced. A quotation from what is referred to as “*Mrs Grant’s Essays on the Superstitions*”<sup>62</sup>

explains that, ““The nearest relation of the deceased often began the ceremony weeping; but did, however, begin it, to give the example of fortitude and resignation”” (266).

However incidental this footnote is to the novel’s plot, it constructs a respectable female authority in “Anne Grant” which reflects back “Mary Brunton’s” own claims to a similar respectable female authority. “Mary Brunton” aligns herself with Mrs Grant: like Grant, she is claiming an experiential knowledge of the Highlanders which is descriptive, not literary. In addition, “Mary Brunton’s” speaking position is quite similar to Grant’s, a knowing but distanced perspective, recalling Grant’s claim to be “not absolutely a native, nor entirely a stranger” (10).

These footnotes help efface the novel’s textuality in another way, as well, by positing a distinction between the *real* Highlands and the Highlands constructed by fashionable discourse. Although *Discipline* itself relies upon these discourses, this reliance is hidden amidst these footnotes’ claims to be giving insight into the authentic Highlands. One such discourse which comes under fire is that of Improvement: the novel itself commends certain kinds of improvement over others (Mr Maitland [alias Henry Graham] is commended for having “nothing theatrical in his plans for [the Highlanders’] interest or improvement” (338), favouring instead a slow change which will preserve essential Highland culture). One footnote, in fact, discusses the issue of improving Scottish inns and makes a potential criticism of Elizabeth Hamilton. Hamilton’s Appendix criticises Scottish inns for their filth and disorder; but in their improvement, suggests Brunton’s footnotes, much has been lost. Ellen’s complaints about the poor state of a Highland inn are commented upon by the author persona who points the didactic finger elsewhere:

Whoever recollects the inns at C--i--gh and B--rr--le, and no doubt many others, as they stood two-and twenty years ago, will be at no loss for the prototypes of Miss Percy’s house of entertainment. Later travellers in the Highlands may not find her description agree with their experience. The ‘land of the mountain and the flood’ has of late been the fashionable resort of the lovers of the picturesque, and of grouse-shooting; the refuge of those who wish to skulk or to economise; of fine gentlemen and fine ladies, who find the world not quite bad enough for them. The

accommodations for travellers are of course improved. It were devoutly to be wished that this had been the only change effected by such visitants (342).

This footnote backgrounds the novel's fictionality (the "prototype") behind real, verifiable experience: the inns depicted seem to be potentially recognisable in the reader's experience. The same factual tone of ethnographic description slides into a more judgmental comment on the changes brought about by the improvement of Highland inns, the effect of which has been to turn the region into an object of consumption by "fashionable" travellers. The footnote criticise this fashionable use of the Highlands, hinting darkly at the "change effected by such visitants." "Visitants" here are constructed as those who have no interest in the authentic Highlands, but use them instead for the more questionable purposes of "skulking" and "economising."

Another possible stab at Elizabeth Hamilton and her overt didacticism is made over the Highlanders' pagan affiliations. Where Hamilton was dismissive of Highland cultural heritage, in Brunton's novel, this heritage is explained in ethnographic discourse in *Discipline*, a language used to displace other, more "inappropriate" discourses, particularly that of didacticism. When Cecil gives Ellen an "Elfin arrow" as a talisman against bad luck, Ellen reflects on the relationship between paganism, Christianity and didacticism:

I could not help smiling at Cecil's humble substitute for the care of Providence, and inwardly moralising upon the equal inefficacy of others which are in more common repute. But as a casual attempt to correct her superstition would have been more likely to shake her confidence in myself than in the elfin arrow, I quietly accepted of her gift, enquiring when she would be in a situation to replace it (263).

Beneath these reflections is the issue of knowledge and authority. Ellen notes that the "casual" response to such a statement would have involved replacing one kind of authority with another: Cecil would clearly be an easy target for her "moralising" but such didacticism would have accomplished little more than alienating Cecil. Instead, the ethnographic discourse of the footnotes transforms the subject of Elfin arrows into a source of a different kind of authority, the author persona's authority of experience:

Elfin *arrow*; more properly , elfin “bolt.” The Gaelic term signifies, “that which can be darted with a destructive force;” there is, therefore, no reason to expect, that these weapons should be feathered and barbed like common arrows...

The author is in possession of one of these talismans; which connoisseurs affirm to be no common elfin arrow, but the weapon of an elf of dignity. It was hurled at a country beauty, whose charms had captivated the Adonis of the district... (263).

Where Hamilton turns ethnographic and picturesque discourse into didactic, Brunton

turns it back again into ethnographic, locating herself as the source of a special experiential knowledge. She seems to offer “proof” of this authority here: her informative translation from Gaelic, the possession of an actual Elfin arrow of her own, drawing the respect of “connoisseurs.” The “casual ... moralising” of Hamilton’s improving discourse is displaced by a knowledge marked by its “authenticity.” Where discourses like those of Hamilton seek to change and alter the Highlands, generally for the worse, Brunton’s footnotes claim instead to be preserving the real Highlands.

And finally, the footnotes construct “simplicity” as a characteristic of the narrative: “simplicity,” with its associations of emotional authenticity and pure experience, is that which seems to pre-exist writing. In this way, the claimed “inartificial[ity]” of the text proves its own simplicity. The text implicitly likens itself to untranslatable, extemporary Gaelic songs. Ellen listens to Cecil’s singing, which is so “touching” that it seems to have an experiential existence prior to language: “Of the plaintive simplicity of the original, - of the effect it derived from the wild and touching air to which it was sung, - my feeble translation can convey no idea; but I give the literal English of the whole\* ... (362). As she emphasises the experiential nature of these songs and her inability to represent them, Ellen is also revealing her own “simplicity” as a function of being not literary enough.

The footnote attached to this comment re-emphasises this “simplicity” as a characteristic of the novel as a whole as well as of Highland culture. The apparently unmediated experiential nature of the text, like the extemporary songs it cannot successfully represent, is pointed to as a literary failure, which is at the same time a victory for female authority. When Cecil sings an extemporary song for Ellen, for example, a footnote



observes:

Extemporary songs are common among the Highlanders. With these they beguile their labours; often, of course, at small expense of taste or invention.

I have been told, that an Argyllshire woman, one evening, while expecting her husband's return, was surprised by a visit from some persons who she guessed to be officers of justice sent to apprehend him. Finding the man absent, they determined to wait his arrival in the hut; taking care of course that his wife should not go out to apprise him of his danger. She contrived, however, to hush her baby with an extemporary song, which, without alarming the vigilance of the guards, warned her husband from his perilous threshold, and he escaped. Other instances, somewhat of a similar kind, suggested the incident in the text.

Indeed, the only merit which the Highland scenes in *Discipline* presume to claim, is, that, however inartificially joined, they are all borrowed from fact (362).

The very vagueness of the origin of this short "I have been told" narrative is paradoxically part of the special authority it is claiming for "Mary Brunton": the "I" of the footnote locates her knowledge in a vague experiential knowledge of folklore rather than any more mediated source. This apparently innocent insight into simpler times when communication was direct and unmediated reflects back on the author persona's own claimed simplicity.

This footnote also quietly reconstructs the problem introduced by Ellen at the beginning of the novel, this time posing a different solution. Where Ellen complained that there is no way of "proving" that her literary motivation is rooted in "English sincerity" as she claims it is, here the problem is restated in terms of truth and experience. Here, the author persona can appear to "prove" her humility by pointing to her own literary inadequacies. "Mary Brunton" can appear to demonstrate in her footnotes that the very awkwardness, or "inartificially joined ... scenes" of her text is evidence of its experiential, non-literary origins: literariness seems to be a necessary sacrifice of truth. The subtle claim that "Highland scenes" are based on real experience is offered as evidence, at some unspoken level, of the novel's literary status as a whole. That this claim hardly "solves" what for Brunton is the problem of writing is less important than its rhetorical strategy of constructing its own simplicity and "factual" origins.

Where Miss Mortimer's simplicity had earlier characterised the novel's claim to a similar "simplicity," the novel takes over the Highlanders as markers of a different "simplicity" which seems to "prove" the text's own claimed non-literary status.

Describing the "simple" Highlanders gives the novel a different "goal" than didacticism, a goal which appears to be of preserving the Highlanders' authenticity. Yet although it may be more subtle, Brunton's construction of the Highlanders is no less problematic than Hamilton's. It not only posits "real" Highlanders, essentially knowable in Brunton's narrative, it also places them in a different narratological chronotope than the author persona. In other words, it is still using the Highlanders to construct female authority, still valorising them for primitive "simplicity" and other-worldliness.

## Conclusion

As writing by women emerges into the nineteenth century, it brings with it a legacy of didacticism, partially evolved from the eighteenth century philosophy of moral sensibility. But although didacticism promises to offer a literary authority in a climate which many women find hostile to their writing, it is often a highly problematic form of authority. Didactic writing claims an agenda of, among other things, improving its readers by correcting the “damage” inflicted by a more dangerous kind of literary pleasure. I will finish this thesis with an examination of a woman writer who articulates very clearly some of the difficulties associated with didacticism in the Highlands . Susan Ferrier’s novels are popular around the same time as Jane Austen and Walter Scott are becoming popular, but she does not take her experimentation as far as do either of these other two novelists.

Susan Ferrier’s novel, *Marriage*, wrestles with the problems of didacticism, marking itself as a didactic novel while at the same time taking issue with the restrictiveness of didacticism. Influenced by both Walter Scott and Jane Austen, Ferrier tries to move away from the didactic model towards a more sophisticated understanding of reading and pleasure. But didactic attitudes are deeply entrenched, and Ferrier is finally unable to disentangle herself from the didacticism which had become such an integral part of both novel writing and writing about the Highlands.

Didacticism is as much a problem for feminist criticism of Ferrier as it is for the criticism of other women writers in this period. Her critics can do little more than apologise for her didacticism, ignoring it as a key aspect of the tradition she is using to authorise herself. In her full length study of Ferrier, Mary Cullinan, for example, fails to address issues of gender, writing and authority in Ferrier’s novels, such as her parodies of “bluestockings” in *Marriage*:

Ferrier's attitude towards intellectual women points to a basic paradox in her character. Although she cultivated intellectual interests, she was ambivalent about the propriety of a woman forsaking domestic life for literary or scientific pursuits. At times she seems as embarrassed by her own talents and knowledge as was Jane Austen (24).

Cullinan can do little more than claim that Ferrier's satire of literary or intellectual women is a "basic paradox in her character," trying to make sense of it as a reflection of Ferrier's personality rather than as part of Ferrier's literary persona. Other critics are similarly apologetic or dismissive of her didacticism, ignoring it in their discussion of her novels.<sup>63</sup> Rosemary Ashton in her Introduction to the Virago edition of *Marriage* also takes Ferrier's criticism of women novelists at face value: "The kind of education for women which Susan Ferrier advocates is not that of a bluestocking. She shows up the artificiality of ladies' literary circles in a chapter near the end of the book ..." (xi). Criticising the "Bluestockings" is more accurately an attempt by Ferrier to distinguish herself from inappropriate kinds of writing by women, proclaiming her own novel, by contrast, didactic.

Recent criticism of Susan Ferrier hails her as an under-appreciated writer, arguing that her reputation has suffered by its proximity to Walter Scott and Jane Austen.<sup>64</sup> Placing her in relation to both provides some insight into some of the difficulties of didacticism. In an undated letter, Ferrier's comments on *Emma* suggest her attraction to a novelistic style which places less emphasis on didacticism:

I have been reading 'Emma', which is excellent; there is no story whatever, and the heroine is no better than other people; but the characters are all so true to life, and the style so piquant, that it does not require the adventitious aids of mystery and adventure (*Memoirs* 128).

She is here obliquely praising Austen for dispensing with didacticism. To Ferrier, Austen is doing something new and radical, using character and style as a form of narration instead of subordinating narrative to didacticism. The heroine is remarkable for depth of characterisation, not for being a didactic model: she is "no better than other people". The implications of Ferrier's comment on Austen are significant. Didactic

writing suggests that writing by women for the wrong reasons can provide a dangerous kind of pleasure to its young readers, leading them away from their natural, domestic sensibility. But in Ferrier's description of *Emma*, the pleasure of reading is its own end.

As well as Austen's *Emma*, Ferrier may also have read with interest Walter Scott's comments on Jane Austen's novel in the *Quarterly Review* of 1815. Scott distinguishes *Emma* from the "novel" of "former times." This kind of writing, "which has arisen almost entirely in our own times" "draws the characters and incidents introduced more immediately from the current of ordinary life than was permitted by the former rules of the novel" (189). Unlike its earlier prototype, the new novel works by,

neither alarming our credulity nor amusing our imagination by wild variety of incident, or by those pictures of romantic affection and sensibility, which were formerly as certain attributes of fictitious characters as they are of rare occurrence among those who actually live and die (192-3).

But Scott argues that fiction which describes "ordinary life" also has a moral aspect to it, by educating human sentiments: he describes it as writing which "proclaim[s] a knowledge of the human heart, with the power and resolution to bring that knowledge to the service of honour and virtue." He also criticises the attitude - found in writers like Hamilton and Ferrier herself - that novel reading is an activity most often carried out by a "debauchee" (188).<sup>65</sup> Scott brings us full circle back to Johnson, who was concerned about "realistic" writing (as in his *Rambler* 4 where he describes this kind of writing as "a mirror which shows all that presents itself without discrimination" [22]). But Scott tries to avoid identifying himself too strongly with didacticism.

Scott describes this new style as "the art of copying from nature as she really exists in the common walks of life, and presenting to the reader, instead of splendid scenes of an imaginary world, a correct and striking representation of that which is daily taking place around him" (193). Scott is clearly not talking about the kind of "correct ... representations" as Anne Grant meant when she characterised her own writing (and, in fact, for which he praises her in the words he writes at her death, discussed in Chapter

2); in fact, he is arguably using the kind of rhetoric she favoured to congratulate Austen's literary style, suggesting that the texture of narrative on its own is justification enough for writing. In other words, Scott is attempting to legitimise the novel for being enjoyable as well as teaching important moral lessons; for him, as for Ferrier, literary pleasure can be its own end. And, according to Ina Ferris, he was successful, particularly in his novels: the novel was becoming increasingly popular as a "cultural form," and was the subject of much discussion in literary journals. "*Waverley*," argues Ferris, "was precisely the text to accelerate this process of incorporation, assuaging critical anxieties so as to allow the novel definitive if still uneasy entry into the literary sphere" (10).

Scott's own novel *Waverley* also influenced *Marriage*. *Waverley* pays some limited tribute to the didactic novel in its form and content: Edward Waverley begins the novel much like Bell Stewart in *Cottagers of Glenburnie*, as an avid, self indulgent reader (13). But instead of ending, like Ellen Percy, with a marriage to a romantic Highlander, Edward leaves the world of romance behind and enters the adult world to marry Rose Bradwardine. There is a didactic frame narrative, which sets itself out at the beginning and is mentioned towards the end, but which fades during the course of the narrative. Scott, perhaps to the envy of his contemporary women writers, writes a novel which exploits both the conduct manual tradition and the tradition of Highland ethnography, without limiting itself to either. In her *Memoir*, Ferrier recalls enjoying *Waverley*; but while there are echoes of *Waverley* in *Marriage*, Ferrier's novel is still more limited by didacticism than is *Waverley*.

Austen was part of a different novelistic tradition from Scott. As Marilyn Butler observes, Austen was simultaneously part of an older tradition of the "anti-jacobin" novel as well as doing something new. Although Austen offers a form of moral outlook in *Emma* - exploiting aspects of the courtship novel/conduct manual tradition to apparently "give advice" on how to prepare for marriage - her didacticism is also subordinated to narrative style. Where Scott is more interested in historical process,



however, Austen uses a carefully crafted narrative irony to “show” character flaw rather than overtly “telling” the reader what the moral is.

For Ferrier, Austen’s style was a tantalising fruit she dared not try herself. Whatever she may have thought privately about didacticism, she is still unwilling to let go of it as a source of authority in her own writing. The title *Marriage*, like Brunton’s title *Discipline*, claims a conduct-manual authority of teaching girls about the correct emotional configuration needed for a happy marriage, while warning against the wrong kind. Ferrier depends on this authority as much as do other didactic novelists, emphasising the moral lessons to be taken away from the experience of reading. Although she liked the fact that *Emma* was a novel with “no story whatever” she still depends on the conventional frame narrative of didacticism in her own work. In fact, Ferrier even complains to her co-writer, Charlotte Claverling, that the didacticism was not overt enough: Ferrier wrote that Claverling’s idea for a novel “wants a *moral*. [A]s the only good purpose of a book is to inculcate morality, and convey some lesson of instruction as delight, I do not see that what is called a *good moral* can be dispensed with in a work of fiction” (although, she notes, this can be seen as an “absurd” rule) (*Memoir*, 75).

So while Ferrier may resent didacticism, she is still unwilling to risk dispensing with it. As with the other writers we have seen, Ferrier must make some tricky distinctions. For example, the mockery of “bluestockings” and other female would-be intellectuals (which Cullinan finds so paradoxical) is an attempt by Ferrier to distinguish herself from a variety of associations “women writers”. By lampooning intellectual pretension in other women, she is perpetuating the same attitude of which she resentfully feels limits her own writing. But there is no way out of this vicious circle. Ferrier makes some attempts at humorous writing, describing for example a clash between Highland backwardness and London over-sophistication; but like other women writers we have seen, her use of a Highland setting winds up mainly in the trap of didacticism, comparing “natural”

sensibility to one which is over-refined.

So Ferrier tries, but fails, to get the best of both worlds. *Marriage* has its place somewhere in between Hamilton's *Cottagers* and Brunton's *Discipline*. Like Hamilton's novel, for example, the standard English of the narrative voice is aligned with right-thinking characters, those who know better than their dialect-speaking Highland counterparts with their outdated beliefs; as critics recommended Hamilton's novel for its utility to the Highlands, Ferrier's novel likewise suggests ways in which the Highlands need improvement. But at the same time, like Brunton, Ferrier does not "sacrifice" the Highlanders to a didactic authority in the way that Hamilton does. Like Brunton, Ferrier shows positive characteristics of the Highlanders which Hamilton is unwilling to entertain, such as the Highlanders' refreshing lack of over-refinement compared to their Southern neighbours. This representation of the unrefined, natural sensibility of the Highlanders is left over from the primitivism which was so popular in the eighteenth century, but in a novel of manners like *Marriage*, it often seems clumsy and awkward.

Another similarity with Brunton is Ferrier's attempt to move out of the limited authority posed by didacticism. Where *Discipline* establishes didactic authority before moving on to a different kind of experiential authority, Ferrier also tries to find other strategies for avoiding too much didacticism. Brunton suggests that taking a pious stance towards Highland beliefs is of little benefit. I will argue that Ferrier suggests in *Marriage* that too much piety in writing is ultimately of little benefit to the reader, that didacticism needs some literary pleasure to make it palatable. In spite of the differences between Brunton and Ferrier - Brunton is more interested in ethnography, while Ferrier keeps returning to issues of morality, education and writing - both attempt to negotiate their way around didactic Highlandism in a way that earlier writers like Grant and Hamilton failed to do.

The changing attitude towards female authorship can be seen in Ferrier's choice of a Preface. Her choice also reflects her interest in morality and writing. In a Preface to

*Marriage*, she chooses a quotation which reflects her desire to nudge didacticism in new directions:

But it must be remembered, that life consists not of a series of illustrious actions, or elegant enjoyments; the greater part of our time passes in compliance with necessities, in the performance of daily duties, in the removal of small inconveniences, in the procurement of petty pleasures; and we are well or ill at ease, as the main stream of life glides on smoothly, or is ruffled by small obstacles and frequent interruption.

The quotation is from the same passage in Johnson's *Journey* discussed in the first chapter, bringing us full circle back to the beginning of this thesis. But at the same time, this is a careful selection of Johnson's words. In the original *Journey*, this passage is preceded by another sentence: Johnson begins these lines by arguing, "These diminutive observations seem to take away something from the dignity of writing, and therefore are never communicated but with hesitation, and a little fear of abasement and contempt" (22). In the full context of the passage, then, Johnson is defending "the dignity of writing," concerned that he may have been perceived as wandering away from his public authority, failing to give "reflections" instead of "impressions". Johnson's concern is that he no longer appears to be producing knowledge which is both morally and intellectually useful, and is instead stooping to "diminutive observations". He is afraid that the wrong kind of detail might jeopardise his authority (especially after having criticised other writers who made little else but generally useless decontextualised "minute" observations on their own travels). He insists that his own use of such observations - in this case observations on domestic arrangements - pose no danger to his authority, however, because they give a sense of "the main stream of life," reflecting human existence in its entirety, made up as it really is of day-to-day details. According to Johnson, "diminutive observations" can fulfil the requirement to "please and instruct" the reader, which is what he feels is the source of his literary dignity. His implication is that "diminutive observations" are all right, so long as they are couched within larger "reflections".

But Ferrier uses this passage to different ends. At first glance, it seems to perform the same role as Hanway or Grant's Prefaces, a modest insistence that she is not performing writing for its own sake but rather for the benefit of others. But upon closer examination, this preface lacks the same mixture of modesty and claims of moral edification found in many prefaces of the period. Not only is Ferrier not making any overt claims to morality (only indirectly by the reference to Johnson, the famous moralist), she is misquoting Johnson to suggest that the "utility" of writing may be in the representation of the texture of "life" rather than in overt didactic lessons. In the original text, Johnson's argument is that writing is potentially debased by "diminutive observations." But in this case it is not: as quoted in Ferrier, he seems to be suggesting that such observations give an overall sense of the whole. These "observations" are referring to a different kind of writing from what Johnson meant when he used the term, as Ferrier probably realised. In Ferrier's Preface, Johnson is enlisted in support of a kind of women's writing. In other words, Ferrier is using Johnson - one of the original popularisers of didactic writing - to authorise her own writing in a way which is potentially not overtly didactic. Johnson seems to be suggesting the different ways that didacticism can work, through description rather than didactic sensibility.

Ferrier's divided attitude towards didacticism is also reflected in her representation of the debate on girls' education. Even though the novel is predictable in its didacticism, Ferrier also criticises excesses of didacticism, suggesting that too much of a good thing becomes counter-productive. In the tradition of didactic novels, Ferrier emphasises the importance of a good education; but as well as criticising the "artificial refinement" taught to girls, she also criticises too little refinement. At one extreme is urban sophistication, and at the other is a rural narrow-minded distrust of anything that appears to be too enjoyable, including any non-didactic pleasure received from reading. By showing these two failed models of education, Ferrier makes way for a third, enacted by her own novel.

At the first extreme is the over-sophisticated Lady Juliana, a young aristocrat who has not been taught to appreciate the simple pleasures of domesticity. The novel opens with a description of her self-indulgent and indecisive behaviour. Her immature attitude towards marriage leads her to make several foolish mistakes within the first three pages of the novel, leaving the reader with no choice but to see the dangers posed to society of a woman lacking domestic feeling. And as if Lady Juliana is not advertisement enough, the narrative voice steps in to point out where her education has gone wrong:

Educated for the sole purpose of forming a brilliant establishment, of catching the eye, and captivating the senses, the cultivation of her mind, or the correction of her temper, had formed no part of the system by which that aim was to be accomplished. Under the auspices of a fashionable mother, and an obsequious governess, the forward petulance of childhood, fostered and strengthened by indulgence and submission, had gradually ripened into that selfishness and caprice, which now, in youth, formed the prominent features of her character (4-5).

This passage reflects many of the main strategies of didacticism. Ferrier's didactic tone here recommends her novel as didactic at the same time as it makes a commentary on education. The seeming objectivity of this didactic discourse serves both to emphasise the results of a failed education, as well as to background the novel's literariness. Lady Juliana's sensibility is clearly wrong. As in Hamilton's treatment of Bell Stewart in Hamilton's *Cottagers of Glenburnie*, Lady Juliana's shortcomings are emphasised. They are also constantly contrasted to the calm, rational tone of the narrative voice. The main point of the novel, it is clearly emphasised from the beginning, is to give instruction on the right kind of sensibility.

Education remains a subject of discussion, both in the novel's plot and in the ongoing commentary on the subject provided by this author persona. It is not long before the other educational extreme is depicted when Lady Juliana goes with her new husband to the Highlands. Here Ferrier exploits the clash of culture between English urban over-refinement and Scottish rural under-refinement. Unlike *Cottagers*, where the young children in the Highlands are as self-indulgent and as full of "selfishness and caprice" as Ferrier's Lady Juliana, the young girls of Glenfern have had too much discipline and not

enough refinement. Glenfern's exclamation at Lady Juliana's upbringing reflects how little attention is paid in the Highlands to the intellectual growth of girls:

'Edication! What has her edication been, to mak her different frae other women? If a woman can nurse her bairns, mak their claes, and manage her hooss, what mair need she do? If she can play a tune on the spinnet, and dance a reel, and play a rubber at whist - nae doot these are accomplishments, but they're soon learnt. Edication! Pooh!' (68-9).

Ferrier may play with popular prejudices less than Hamilton, but she still plays with them. If she is not sacrificing the Highlanders to her didactic authority, she is nevertheless drawing on the stereotype of Scots as being backward and uncultivated to criticise the discourse of didacticism. Glenfern's pronunciation acts reductively not only on his own coarseness but also on fancy notions of female education. As much as Lady Juliana advertises the failure of too little discipline, so do the young girls of Glenfern advertise the danger of too much: they are awkward, clumsy and lacking in social grace. Glenfern is criticised a few lines later for his "persevering simplicity," a literal-minded refusal to look beyond the purely domestic as the only material morally fit for women's education. Simple and unselfconscious the girls of Glenfern may be, but too much simplicity is clearly not the answer to too much refinement. Ferrier is perhaps the first user of Highlandism to suggest that "simplicity" is not the lost dream of primitivism that has been previously suggested, but a prejudiced, narrow-minded understanding of human nature in the same almost superstitious ways as Adam Smith's savages. Like the description of Lady Juliana, the narrative voice is so comparatively judicious that it is suggestively embodying a third way in which these two extremes can be bridged. But clearly, Ferrier is talking about more than just education here. Beneath her critique of incorrect attitudes towards education is an attempt to justify a form of non-didactic writing through the apparatus of didacticism. She uses the Highlanders to depict the limitations of didacticism, particularly in its attitudes towards female reading. The kind of overt censoring of female reading made six years earlier in *Cottagers* is parodied in the older generation of Glenfern, who are overly concerned about any kind of literary pleasure, preferring a text which is unrelentingly didactic:



“...I’m certain all Mary’s bad health is entirely owing to reading. You know, we always thought she read a great deal too much for her good.”

“Much depends on the choice of books,” said Jacky, with an air of the most profound wisdom. ‘Fordyce’s Sermons, and the History of Scotland, are two of the very few books *I* would put into the hands of a young woman. Our girls have read little else,” -- casting a look at Mrs Douglas, who was calmly pursuing her work in the midst of this shower of darts all levelled at her (179).

This insistence on didacticism is very clearly close-minded: the sarcastic description of Jacky’s “air of the most profound wisdom” suggests a mantle of authority which she believes to be beyond criticism, but which is little more than a pious self-righteousness. And as if that is not justification enough, this attempt at education has failed: the aunts’ attempts at education are just as wrong-headed as has been that of Lady Juliana: Fordyce’s *Sermons* are the book in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* out of which Mr Collins reads piously to the girls; the echo of Austen here recalls Ferrier’s interest in the possibility she saw in *Emma* of a novel which is not overtly didactic.

The character making these comments is said to be directing them at another character. Mrs Douglas is the idealised older woman figure like Hamilton’s Mrs Mason and Brunton’s Miss Mortimer, who embodies the correct attitudes towards education and discipline. In fact, like Mrs Mason and Miss Mortimer, so aligned with the narrative voice is Mrs Douglas that she is in part another version of the author persona, sharing the stated goal of wanting to teach young girls. Another similarity between these three older woman figures derives from their qualities of calm, rationality and self-possession, qualities which are the result of their own good educational background. It is this background which they seek to pass on to the next generation of girls. Mrs Douglas’ education is described in the same apparently objective language as is used to describe Lady Juliana:

Alicia Malcolm [i.e. Mrs Douglas] was put under the care of her aunt at two years of age. A governess had been procured for her, whose character was such as not to impair the promising dispositions of her pupil. Alicia was gifted by nature with a warm affectionate heart, and a calm imagination attempered its influence. Her governess, a woman of a strong understanding and enlarged mind, early instilled into her a deep and strong sense of religion; and to it she owed the support which

had safely guided her through the most trying vicissitudes (74).

The sense of duty and values of honesty and sincerity Mrs Douglas learned from this education have carried her through a series of difficult periods in which she has always made the correct decision (particularly with regards to marriage). Charged with the education of one of Lady Juliana's twin daughters, Mary, she passes on these same values to the next generation:

Mrs Douglas had read much, and reflected more; and many faultless theories of education had floated in her mind. But her good sense soon discovered how unavailing all theories were, whose foundations rested upon the inferred wisdom of the teacher ... To engraft into her infant soul the purest principles of religion, was therefore the chief aim of Mary's preceptress. The fear of God was the only restraint imposed upon her dawning intellect; and from the Bible alone was she taught the duties of morality - not in the form of a dry code of law, to be read with a solemn face on Sundays, or learned with weeping eyes as a weekday task - but adapted to her youthful capacity by judicious illustration, and familiarized to her taste by hearing its stories and precepts from the lips she best loved (158).

That this passage is closely aligned to the narrative perspective is no accident. Although on the surface it seems to be a plea for attention to religion in a girl's upbringing, it is really about the complex relationships between authority and didacticism. Mary is educated straight from the Bible, but the emphasis is on how she learns to *read* the Bible. Mrs Douglas, having been brought up by a woman with "strong understanding" and "enlarged mind" knows the value of critical reading, and passes this skill on to Mary. In fact, knowing how to read critically is also what enables Mrs Douglas to avoid the kind of narrow, excessively pious attitudes towards education in the first place: of the "many faultless theories of education" she is aware, Mrs Douglas has "read much and reflected more," as if the ability to "reflect" on reading material is at least as important as reading itself. Ferrier's comments on the Bible are part of her critique of didactic authority: instead of forcing Mary into a "simple" reading of the lessons of the Bible, she "adapts them" with "judicious illustration" and by "familiar[izing] them" to Mary's taste. Didactic material, this passage suggests, is not enough: the material needs to be made enjoyable and the learner needs to be taught "reflection". Pleasure is part of the experience of reading and poses no danger if the reader is critical. But at the same time,

Ferrier was probably uncomfortable with any overt critique of didacticism, and embeds her critique in a safe text, the ultimate didactic narrative of the Bible: even though Mary has done a good deal of reading, the only actual text mentioned is the Bible. So if there is a subtle critique of the “faultless theories” of education, Ferrier is just as guilty of choosing a “faultless” text to make her point. And if she insists that pleasure is a healthy and useful part of reading, she does not enact her own argument, couching it instead in the strictest didactic discourse available.

And Ferrier is careful to show that critical reading does not endanger Mary’s natural sensibility. Mrs Dougla’s education of Mary exploits her natural “simplicity,” but also enables Mary to move beyond the “persevering simplicity” of the Highlands. Travelling south for the first time, Mary’s appreciation of the landscape displays her positive sensibility: Ferrier draws on the discourse of Highlandism to show her ability to appreciate nature in the same simple and unmediated ways as those described by Anne Grant and Dorothy Wordsworth. Mary is as impressed by the landscape as any traveller of “cultivated and unsophisticated” sensibility:

Her cultivated taste and unsophisticated mind could descry beauty in the form of a hill, and grandeur in the foam of the wave, and elegance in the weeping birch, as it dipped its now almost leafless boughs in the mountain stream. These simple pleasures, unknown alike to the sordid mind and vitiated taste, are ever exquisitely enjoyed by the refined yet unsophisticated child of nature (198).

Mary seems to embody the best of both worlds: the “simplicity” of the Highlanders, able to enjoy these “simple pleasures,” while avoiding their social clumsiness. Ferrier, however, is caught in the same difficulty as Grant, forced to use the often strained rhetoric of Highlandism which hardly reflects the lack of sophistication and simple pleasure it is describing in Mary. But she also avoids some of the problems faced by Grant. Grant wanted to be at once “simple” and “unrefined,” making the awkward implication that real refinement is needed to appreciate a lack of refinement. Insisting on her own simplicity, as I have argued, reflected a self-awareness which is a sharp contrast to the kind of sensibility simplicity is supposed to reflect. But Ferrier’s novel works

better: described in the third person, Mary can appear to be the unselfconscious heroine that Grant always wanted to be herself.

Showing Mary's simultaneous "cultivation" and lack of over-sophistication becomes even more tricky when it comes to negotiating the potential contradiction between being a critical reader and being unselfconsciously simple. Mrs Douglas's educational theories are proved correct: Mary's critical skills, like Mrs Douglas's before her, are what protects her and allow her to remain simple. It is also what allows her to make the right decision about courtship and marriage. When Mary must interact with her twin sister, Adelaide (raised by Lady Juliana in an urban setting, and taught, like her mother, too much refinement and sophistication for her own good), she is at first confused by Adelaide's strangely superficial behaviour:

"Desire Tomkins," said [Adelaide] to a footman, "to ask Lady Juliana for the 'Morning post', and the second volume of 'Le --', of the French novel I am reading and say she shall have it again when I have finished it."

"In what different terms people may express the same meaning," thought Mary; "had I been sending a message to my mother, I should have expressed myself quite differently; but no doubt my sister's meaning is the same, though she may not use the same words."

The servant returned with the newspaper, and the novel would be sent when it could be found.

"Lady Juliana never reads like anybody else," said her daughter; she is for ever mislaying books. She has lost the first volumes of the two last novels that came from town, before I had even seen them."

This was uttered in the softest, sweetest tone imaginable, and as if she had been pronouncing a panegyric.

Mary was more and more puzzled.

"What can be my sister's meaning here?" thought she; "the words seem almost to imply censure; but that voice and smile speak the sweetest praise. How truly Mrs Douglas warned me never to judge people by their words" (226).

This passage is an overtly didactic description of over-refinement at the same time as it depicts the kind of skills which didacticism cannot teach. It characterises the possible effects of the wrong kind of female reading. Adelaide shares more than a sister sensibly named "Mary" with Bell Stewart of *Cottagers*: like Bell whose excessive reading prevents her from proper domestic action, Adelaide lazily sends a footman to get her

book. Her language, like Bell's, strains at artifice and refinement, suggesting a self-consciousness absent in Mary. As Mary sees, Adelaide's language is dangerously slippery, a division between form and content which cannot be trusted. Meaning slides away from the words used to convey it, in a particularly feminine display of dangerous wiles. This recalls Grant's hostility to what she depicted as "dazzle" and "ornament" in women writers, opposed to her own "scrupulous fidelity," even though there was no way to distinguish her own "simple" writing from this other kind. Ferrier exploits the distinction between simple and dangerous uses of language used by other women writers. By criticising a kind of reading which is associated with insincere feeling, Ferrier's discourse seems by contrast all the more sincere. Adelaide, like Lady Juliana, is clearly getting the wrong kind of pleasure out of reading, even though Ferrier has earlier suggested that too much guarding against the pleasure of reading is counterproductive.

But if it makes this criticism of Lady Juliana and Adelaide, this passage also criticises the very terms of its own criticism. Too much didacticism does not teach the kind of skills Mary needs to negotiate the devious ways of an urban environment; without these skills, she could very likely succumb to the dangerous feminine wiles of her mother and sister. Faced with Adelaide's odd behaviour, Mary is saved by the critical skills taught to her by a figure very much like the author persona. Her first reaction is that of the "simple" or literal minded reader: she supposes that no matter how it is dressed, what is finally important is the meaning, that others' use of words must be as guileless as her own. But simplicity is not enough: when Adelaide goes on to make a negative comment about her mother, Mary's recalls the lessons of Mrs Douglas and becomes wary of non-representational discourse, of the potential slipperiness of meaning. The suggestion is that teaching girls to think critically allows them to spot dangerous uses of language and avoid them. And if the alternative is to only allow girls didactic material, to blind them to other uses of language will only make them easy prey to these devious slippages of meaning. Thus while Ferrier attempts to protect her feminine literary respectability, at the same time she also suggests that pleasure has a place in reading.

Ferrier's questioning of didacticism is significant, but does not quite go far enough. To imply that the ultimate justification for writing is still in its ability to morally improve its reader is to avoid the real issue which preoccupies so many writers of this period: literary pleasure. Ferrier, like others before her, still claims that it is possible to control the different kinds of pleasure available in reading, although at the same time she seems drawn to a notion of pleasure in a wider context.

Didacticism is an attempt to resolve some of the problems associated with the profession of writing in the Eighteenth century. Some of these problems are articulated by Samuel Johnson, who finds that literariness can threaten to diminish the usefulness of writing. Another series of problems is faced by women writers: Anne Grant articulates what she feels is the potential for dubious morality when women take to writing. Didacticism appears to offer a safe, morally righteous literary site, from which a woman writer can claim to be instilling what Gary Kelly calls the "domestically useful discourses of 'taste' that could add an inflection of gentility to middle class private life" (7).

But didacticism is not the answer to these problems that it may appear to be. It not only accepts but also perpetuates the dichotomy between the male public sphere and the female private sphere, reproducing the notion that women occupy a different social strata than men. In fact, didactic writing places itself in a difficult position, suggesting that women should not play a public role; in this way, it must always deny its own public status. Women's didactic writing of the eighteenth century must almost always appear to promote its didactic status at the expense of its own literariness. This thesis has explored how different women found different means of negotiating the contradictions of didactic writing.

But if it did not solve the problems of public writing from the private sphere for women, didactic writing did contain the seeds of another kind of writing by women: the female



*Bildungsroman*. With its early roots in conduct manual literature, writing for young girls may have been conservative in origins, teaching girls to assimilate themselves into a patriarchal culture as they matured. But this kind of writing also has the potential to reflect the personal sacrifices young girls must make to enter into the script of patriarchal culture. Maggie Tulliver, in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, is just one of the first female heroines to show the failings of the didactic script for women. Later novels of the twentieth century, as varied as Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1976) and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) experiment with breaking free of the confines of earlier didactic writing while still depicting the experiences of young girls facing the rites of adulthood. With all its difficulties for critics, eighteenth-century didactic writing does expose some of the many discrepancies between women's lived experience and the literary scripts which have traditionally described their roles.

<sup>1</sup> See for example Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988). Langford in particular discusses the growing emphasis on "politeness" in this period, another factor leading to women's desire for respectability.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Perry's chapter "The Economic Status of Women" in *Women, Letters and the Novel*.

<sup>3</sup> "Lo next two slip-shod Muses traipse along,/In lofty madness, meditating song,/With tresses soaring from poetic dreams,/And never wash'd, but in Castalia's streams:/Haywood, Centlivre, Glories of their race!" (Book III, 141-45).

<sup>4</sup> Many feminist critics fail to point out, however, that Pope is partly making this attack on Haywood to counter her lampooning of a friend of his in *The New Utopia* (see for more details Sutherland's notes, p. 119).

<sup>5</sup> Eleanor Ty, for example, promises that her study is going to look to both history and culture to situate her five women writers of the 1790s, but her main goal is to use theory to "prove" their anti-conservatism and latent feminism. She rather inappropriately insists, for example, that some of these writers were using an Irigarayan "hysterical" discourse: "miming their male master's language, often suppressing their own desire, and yet, at the same time, in many ways subverting the Law of the Father through contradictoriness and multiplicity of text" (20). But such theoretical readings ignore relevant historical factors, even rather blatant ones. She misreads the character of Virginia in Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) as a critique of "conventional 'feminine' virtues of docility and compliance" (21). In fact, Ty fails to observe that the character of Virginia was a critique of the educational theories of Rousseau, promoted by a friend of her father, Thomas Day (the character of Clarence Hervey seeks to experiment with her education after reading *Émile*). Ty also insists that "one cannot help but be entertained by and even admire the caricatured character Harriet Freke, the 'champion for the Rights of Woman' ... whimsical, free-spoken, dashing and eccentric, Harriet Freke, with her ideas of liberty, may not be such a 'freak' when one considers the alternatives and ideologies with which she had to contend" (21). Ty clearly wishes this to be the case; but in fact there is little room in the novel to like Harriet Freke, who is - among other things - cruel, racist, manipulative, foolish and a malicious gossip. Such attempts to impose Twentieth century feminist impulses in eighteenth century novels ignore the historical context in which these novels were written.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla's introduction to *The Sublime: A Reader in British*

*Eighteenth Century Aesthetic Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. Ashfield and de Bolla see the sublime, and its related discourses, as a “technology of the subject”.

<sup>7</sup> Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts have recently published a series of articles entitled, *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century* (1996). While Porter’s discussion of “pleasure” in the Enlightenment is interesting, it does not significantly influence my own discussion for two reasons. First, Porter does not devote enough attention to “moral” pleasure which to my mind is central to Eighteenth century distinctions about different kinds of pleasure. Second, he is more interested in political science. Other contributions similarly use a wide ranging notion of pleasure. Porter’s other article, “Material Pleasures in the Consumer Society,” for example, is arguably more a discussion of the rise of leisure activities like sport than it is the philosophy informing the evolving notion of “pleasure.”

<sup>8</sup> Much has been written about Hume’s complex and changing notion of sympathy; see for example, John B. Radner, “The Art of Sympathy in Eighteenth-Century British Moral Thought,” in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Cultures* 9 (1979): 189-210. I will leave this ongoing discussion aside, however, as I am here primarily interested more in the popular notion of sympathy, particularly how it influenced and was appropriated by a variety of women writers.

<sup>9</sup> See for example Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (eds), *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) and Kim Ian Michasiw, “Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque” in *Representations* 38 (Spring 1992): 76-100.

<sup>10</sup> Ann Jessie Van Sant defines sensibility in a literary context as “an organic sensitivity dependent on brain and nerves and underlying a) delicate moral and aesthetic perception; b) acuteness of feeling, both emotional and physical; and c) susceptibility to delicate passion arousal” (1).

<sup>11</sup> Janet Todd argues, for example, that “[I]n all forms of sentimental literature, there is an assumption that life and literature are directly linked, not through any notion of a mimetic depiction of reality but through the belief that the literary experience can intimately affect the living one” (*Sensibility*, 4).

<sup>12</sup> See for example Carol Kay, “Sympathy, Sex, and Authority in Richardson and Hume,” *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 12 (1983): 77-92.

<sup>13</sup> See for example John Mullan’s chapter, “Richardson: Sentiment and the Construction of Femininity” in *Sentiment and Sensibility: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century*.

<sup>14</sup> John Mullan observes that “Richardson’s lifelong project, for example, was to propose his novels as comparable with the most eternally instructive of religious texts” (13).

<sup>15</sup> Marjorie Hope discusses this in more detail, for example, in *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 1951.

<sup>16</sup> See for example Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988.

<sup>17</sup> See for example Marylea Meyerson, “Jane Austen’s Garrulous Speakers: Social Criticism in *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*” in *Reading and Writing Women’s Lives: A Study of the Novel of Manners* (edited by Barbara Brothers and K. Bowers Bege, Ann Arbor, 1990) and Marilyn Butler, “Sensibility and Jacobinism” in *Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice* (edited by Robert Clark, New York: St Martins, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> For Addison, Chaucer is famously “unpolish’d,” a writer who “amus’d a barb’rous age” in “An Account of the Greatest English Poets,” 1694.

<sup>19</sup> I am aware that the term “ethnography” as the “scientific description of nations or races of men, with their customs, habits and points of difference” (*OED*) does not come into usage until the late Nineteenth century; and this is not how early writers such as Blackwell, or indeed Anne Grant, would have seen their writing; instead, description of primitive culture in this period (particularly regarding the Highlanders) is often somewhere between a critical appreciation of the art of the Highlanders or development of stadialist theories of human nature, often focused on human morality. However, I use the term ethnography, in the sense that these writers are attempting to extract certain principles from a study of the cultural difference of Highland society.

<sup>20</sup> Richard B. Sher discusses in more detail the contribution of the Edinburgh literati in his article, "Those Scotch Imposters and their Cabal': Ossian and the Scottish Enlightenment." 55-64 in *Man and Nature: Proceedings of the Canadian Society for Eighteenth Century Studies*. London, Ontario: Faculty of Education, 1892.

<sup>21</sup> These two projects were Carl Linné's *Systema Naturae* (*The System of Nature*) and "the launching of Europe's first major international scientific expedition, a joint effort intended to determine once and for all the exact shape of the earth" (*Imperial Eyes*, 16).

<sup>22</sup> Mary Louise Pratt describes how Eighteenth century travel writing "aspires to a stable fixing of subjects and systems of differences" ("Scratches," 121).

<sup>23</sup> See for example Pat Rogers's *Samuel Johnson*, Chapter 3 ("An Age of Discovery") and Thomas Curley, *Samuel Johnson and the Age of Travel*. Chapter 2, "Johnson and the Tradition of Travel Literature."

<sup>24</sup> Curley for example discusses how Johnson "adopted Martin's scientific format" (211).

<sup>25</sup> See Curley, 197.

<sup>26</sup> Other writers take issue with Johnson's extreme skepticism in the matter of Highland geography. Years later writers still criticise Johnson's cynical tone: on the subject of Loch Ness, Spence writes, "This is not, as Dr Johnson supposes, an assertion founded on its generally remaining open through the winter, when other waters freeze, but an incontestible truth" (215). Wanting to avoid the kind of inappropriate authority of Johnson in her own description of the Highlands, Spence devolves authority back to the Highlanders.

<sup>27</sup> See for example Bronson, 179.

<sup>28</sup> Spence describes how one of the ballads in her *Sketches* was given to her by Anne Grant (45); in Chapter 5 I discuss how Mary Brunton quotes "Mrs Grant" as an authority on Highland culture.

<sup>29</sup> For more details, see *Memoir and Correspondence of Mrs Grant of Laggan* 1: 1-31.

<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Grant is critical of the forces of improvement in the Highlands, noting that much of what they do destroys Highland culture as well as economy: "A sort of inverted benevolence seems to pervade every plan for the improvement of the highlands, every other scheme that has been suggested for the amelioration of their condition, has the ultimate consequence of extinguishing their high-toned enthusiasm, degrading their character." (*Essay*, 145).

<sup>31</sup> Having said this, I must admit I would not be that surprised to find out that Grant had made up some or all of her letters in order to publish them.

<sup>32</sup> This letter is contained in MS version along with a third edition of *Letters from the Mountains*.

<sup>33</sup> Although undated, the letter must have been written in the early 1800s, as it refers to Grant's many children.

<sup>34</sup> I would like to comment more on Grant's situation as a mother of 8 children living on a limited income; however, there is very little available information.

<sup>35</sup> Although by 1811 both Burns and Scott had become popular as Scottish poets, Grant's influence in this period is still mainly Hugh Blair.

<sup>36</sup> Although the concept of the imagination has a variety of complex associations in the late Eighteenth/early Nineteenth century, I believe that Grant's usage suggests a more basic definition, consisting of the creative faculty which allows speculation beyond what can be perceived by the five senses. It is useful here to recall Lord Kames's definition of imagination in *Elements of Criticism* (1762), a definition which seems to be aligned with that of Grant: "This singular power of fabricating images without any foundation in reality, is distinguished by the name of *imagination*" (480).

<sup>37</sup> Spencer, however, does not note that it was women writers as well as men who actively perpetuated this association.

<sup>38</sup> This passage can be compared to one of Hugh Blair: "The progress of the world in this respect resembles the progress of age in man. The powers of imagination are most vigorous and predominant in youth; those of the understanding ripen more slowly and often attain not their maturity till the imagination begin to flag. Hence poetry, which is the child of imagination, is frequently most glowing and animated in the first ages of society" (*Critical Inquiry*, 850). Grant introduces into Blair's terms a rhetoric of boundaries which she uses to characterise her own writing.

<sup>39</sup> Grant's criticism of the Gothic also reflects her increasing reliance on didacticism and strict representational writing, since her early letters are filled with references to her "Gothic imagination".

<sup>40</sup> In an attempt to avoid confusion, in this chapter I will refer to Dorothy Wordsworth as "Dorothy" and William Wordsworth by the full name. Although in many ways it would be consistent with the rest of this thesis to refer to her by her last name, the name "Wordsworth" has such a canonical weight that it invariably sounds awkward to use it to refer to Dorothy.

<sup>41</sup> Further evidence is provided for this assertion by Chris Gittings and Jo Manton, who for example point out her willingness to follow Samuel Roger's "plan to have the manuscript published" (147).

<sup>42</sup> Rachel M. Brownstein argues for instance that "she is interesting because of our curiosity about how people really spend their days, what is really important about them" in "The Private Life: Dorothy Wordsworth Wordsworth's Journals". *Modern Language Quarterly* 1973 (34). 48-63 (49); much of Pamela Woof's work on Dorothy Wordsworth makes similar observations.

<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth Gunn, for example, derives from a reading of Dorothy Wordsworth's writing that she "was no moaner" in her full-length study, *A Passion for the Particular: Dorothy Wordsworth, A Portrait*. London: Gollancz, 1981 (34).

<sup>44</sup> See for example Sheila Huftel, "Reflections on a Tour Made in Scotland: August 1803" *Contemporary Review*. August 1986 (249:1447). 89-93; Paula Hughes-Hallet, *Home at Grasmere: The Wordsworths and the Lakes*. (London: Collins and Brown, 1993); Catherine Macdonald Maclean, *Dorothy Wordsworth and William Wordsworth*. (NY: Haskell, 1972); most of Pamela Woof's work, especially her article on Dorothy Wordsworth's travel writing, "Dorothy Wordsworth and the Pleasures of Recognition: An Approach to the Travel Journals." *The Wordsworth Circle* Summer 1991 (22:3) (150-60). Even much contemporary criticism is quite descriptive, such as Susan Levin's *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism* (1987) and Robert Gittings's *Dorothy Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985).

<sup>45</sup> Other critics have made similar feminist critiques of Romanticism, including noting how poetry became the ideal literary form, banishing women writers to the lesser "romance" novel and other genres, such as journals and letters. See for example Alan Richardson, "Romanticism and the Colonization of the Feminine". *Romanticism and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988. 12-25. Richardson argues that in the transition from the Enlightenment, or "Age of Reason" to the Romantic "Age of Feeling," male writers "drew on memories and fantasies of identification with the mother in order to colonize the conventionally feminine domain of sensibility" in more "literary" form than so-called women's genres (13).

<sup>46</sup> Thus when she isolates strategies of "overcoming the anxiety of feminine inadequacy, playing against it, turning it on its head" (4), she incorrectly implies that this is a new anxiety, specific to women in the Romantic period. She also implies that women were preoccupied with defining themselves in Romantic discourse; her claim that Dorothy Wordsworth, like other "women in Romanticism, forged an art that undercut the presumptions of power in the great poetry of the age" using "knowledge of maternity and the nurture of the young lady" which was "closely entwined in [a] bodily knowledge" (5) implies that these literary preoccupations were somehow new to Romanticism, when in fact they had been popularised by Samuel Richardson and other didactic writing a generation earlier.

<sup>47</sup> A reference to this book by William Wordsworth, for example, is found in de Selincourt p 198.

<sup>48</sup> The masculine sublime is discussed by, among others, Anne K. Mellor in *Romanticism and Gender* (19), Margaret Homans *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth Century Women's Writing* and in Snyder (above); aside from Mellor, Bohls does not mention these other studies.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Fadem, for example, insists that "By inflating Dorothy Wordsworth's stature as a critic and writer, we in fact do her a disservice: we deflect attention from her real significance to William, and hence to us." "Dorothy Wordsworth: A View from 'Tintern Abbey'". *Wordsworth Circle* 1978 (9). 17-32; J.C. Shairp makes a similar point in his 1874 introduction to an edition of *Recollections*.

<sup>50</sup> Alexander, Meena. "Dorothy Wordsworth: The Grounds of Writing". *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 1988 (14:3). 195-210. p. 200.

<sup>51</sup> Boden asserts, for example, that in the *Continental Journals*, Dorothy, "like Mary Wordsworth, can and



does resist and rewrite William Wordsworth's master narrative. The *Journals* affords many examples of explicit self-assertion and self-definition" (xvi).

<sup>52</sup> William clearly liked this poetic theme, and produced at least two others about mysterious Highland women.

<sup>53</sup> Armstrong says of the conduct book that in spite of its apparent emptiness, a figure emerges of "female subjectivity, a grammar really, awaited the substance that the novel and its readers, as well as the countless individuals educated according to the model of the new woman, would eventually provide" (*Desire*, 60).

<sup>54</sup> For example see Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (54) and Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen* (78).

<sup>55</sup> This construction of "Elizabeth Hamilton" as a didactic author in one case begins even before she starts writing: a Memoir of her life, which prefaces some later editions of *Cottagers*, describes her as publishing her work only at the encouragement of friends: "It was only by slow degrees ... that that feminine delicacy of temperament, which peculiarly distinguished her, was reconciled to the idea of exposing the inmost workings of the mind to the view of the world. Success, doubtless, tended greatly to efface this womanly reluctance" (Preface. *Cottagers*. Edinburgh: Chambers edition, 1837. iv).

<sup>56</sup> Review of *Cottagers of Glenburnie*. *Edinburgh Review* 12 (April - Jul 1808): 401-10.

<sup>57</sup> "Character and Writings of Mrs E Hamilton" [Maria Edgeworth] *Gentlemen's Magazine* 86 (Jul-Dec 1816): 623.

<sup>58</sup> Review of *Cottagers of Glenburnie*. *Critical Review* 34 (Dec 1802): 421.

<sup>59</sup> Review of *Cottagers of Glenburnie*. *Monthly Review* 56 (Oct 1809): 217-8.

<sup>60</sup> Review of *Cottagers of Glenburnie*. *Annual Review* 27 (1808): 608.

<sup>61</sup> Brunton is another woman writer, like Hamilton, about whom little good criticism has been written. As with other didactic novelists, Brunton's didacticism is brushed off: in her introduction to the recently re-issued edition of *Discipline*, for example, Fay Weldon echoes Dale Spender when she notes that although "improving the Brunton novels may be" they are still "fun ... to read" (vii); The "high moral tone within the novel" is a necessary compromise for the time it was written, and, she adds that "Fiction is, of course, both powerful and dangerous" (although unlike Spender she does not go so far as to say this is actually the case with Brunton), concluding that "it is ... hard to keep a good novel down" (viii). The suggestion that Brunton's novels have been suppressed is entirely unconvincing; the fact is that didactic women's writing will always remain an "embarrassment" for feminist criticism if it does not come to terms with the fact that women writers were actively promoting attitudes towards female morality which are now found distasteful.

<sup>62</sup> It is interesting that in Brunton's quotation, "Mrs Grant" becomes part of the title of the book, as if the author's persona were of major importance.

<sup>63</sup> See for example Nelson S. Rushnell, "Susan Ferrier's *Marriage* as Novel of Manners," *Studies in Scottish Literature*. 1968 (5). 216-228.

<sup>64</sup> See for example Wendy Craik, "Susan Ferrier" *Scott Bicentenary Essays*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973.

<sup>65</sup> It is unsurprising that Grant's comment on *Waverley* is to commend it as a "true and chaste delineation" of Scotland, although it is not entirely fair to the Highlanders (*Memoir* 2: 50).

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